

*The*

# **FAITH** **OF MILLIONS**

**THE CREDENTIALS OF  
THE CATHOLIC RELIGION**



**BY THE REVEREND  
JOHN A. O'BRIEN, PH.D.**  
**OUR SUNDAY VISITOR, HUNTINGTON, IND.**

# THE FAITH OF MILLIONS

The Credentials of the Catholic Religion

by

The Rev. John A. O'Brien, Ph.D., LL.D.

With a Preface

by

His Eminence William Cardinal O'Connell,  
Archbishop of Boston

and an Introduction by

His Eminence Dennis Cardinal Dougherty,  
Archbishop of Philadelphia

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To

HIS EMINENCE DENNIS CARDINAL DOUGHERTY

ARCHBISHOP OF PHILADELPHIA

*Whose Counsel and Advice Have Been*

*Sources of Encouragement and*

*Inspiration*

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR

WITH HIS FILIAL LOVE AND GRATITUDE

## HOW TO CONDUCT A RELIGIOUS DISCUSSION CLUB

A religious discussion club is a group of persons meeting at regular intervals to improve their knowledge of religious matters by cooperative study and discussion. Members acquire information regarding some specific subject, and develop accuracy of statement and the power of self-expression, through discussion. Under the guidance of a discussion leader the topic of the paragraph is laid open to all. Each member is free to speak, as the very essence of the club is discussion. Members unconsciously develop from this experience an ease of expression.

*The discussion method* is simplicity itself. A simple textbook is chosen and a copy is provided for each member of the club. The members in turn read aloud a brief passage from the text while the rest follow silently. The leader then encourages a retelling of the paragraph or passage by asking questions that bring out its obvious highlights. Discussion literally means "shaking apart." The discussion method shakes apart a reliable text, i. e., its chief feature is a practical analysis of the text.

*The Small Group.* The discussion group ordinarily has eight to twelve members, for only within a small group is spontaneous discussion possible. Where as many as sixteen people apply for membership, it is well to form two clubs which will meet separately. A small group is informal and each member has time to express himself and enter freely into the discussion.

In a large group, the talking is usually done by a few, and not always by the best qualified. Congenial persons should be placed in the same group, to produce less restraint and better cooperation.

### OFFICERS

*A Spiritual Director.* The religious discussion club should always be under the guidance of a priest. The local



pastor is usually requested to act as Spiritual Director, or to appoint another priest to do so.

When a question arises and the group is not agreed as to a decision, it is always referred to the Spiritual Director. However, discussion clubs are for the laity; if they are to accomplish their purpose, the laity must do the work.

A *Leader* need not be an expert. He also is a learner in this informal group committed to cooperative study and discussion. He should acquire a clear knowledge of the subject-matter, and learn to direct the discussion, and hold it to the chief points of the assignments. *Do not overstress the requirements for leadership—it is a simple task.* The leader need not be further advanced in natural gifts or religious instruction than the other members of the club.

The leader should use the *Discussion Aids* (which follow each chapter) in conducting the discussion. He should see that every member is given an opportunity to take part, and should consider and respect every member's opinion on the subject.

A *Secretary* (1) Calls the roll; (2) Reads the brief record of the previous meeting (mainly a digest of the chief thoughts developed in the discussion); (3) Records and refers to the Spiritual Director questions that cannot be decided by the group.

*Who Are Members.* The discussion club is not merely for exceptional laymen, experts and college graduates, but for all persons of high-school years and over, quite regardless of their degree of formal education. Anyone who can read and is willing to use his mind "in learning more of the things of our blessed Lord and of His Church" can profitably join a club without very extensive study or expenditure of time. Members should be urged to attend every meeting, even though they have made no preparation. If they have their texts they may profitably participate in the discussion even without previous preparation.

Every member should realize that the success of the discussion club depends primarily upon his or her own individual preparation and responsiveness. Discussion (which will present and develop the subject) is the very nature of the discussion club.

Each member obtains a copy of the textbook adopted; this is necessary for efficient work. He feels personally re-

sponsible for attending every meeting, and for taking his text. People can discuss profitably only in such measure as they acquire correct information and a vocabulary to communicate it readily.

*Frequent Meetings for a Short Period.* Eight or ten weekly meetings of an hour or an hour and a half, which begin and end promptly, are generally more satisfactory than meetings held less often for a longer period. Subject-matter of the previous meeting is more readily recalled and related, and members cannot forget on which week the meeting is held.

*The First Meeting.* Read and discuss the first lesson of the text, even though no preparation was made except by the leader. This will demonstrate the simplicity of the discussion method.

Select a name by which to distinguish your club from others in the parish or city. Saints' names are often used.

Discuss and decide the permanent day and hour of meeting during the session. Give the place of the next meeting.

#### *Order of Meeting:*

1. Begin promptly.
2. Open with prayer.
3. Roll call by secretary.
4. Brief review of previous assignment.
5. Reading and discussion of assigned text. Leader keeps the discussion within bounds of the assignment, and promotes participation by the members.
6. Assignment of lesson for the following meeting.
7. If meetings are held at different homes, announce the place of the next one.
8. Adjourn on time, closing with prayer.

Suggest that after discussion each member ask himself the following questions: (1) What are the leading ideas of the lesson? (2) What new information have I gained? (3) Have any of my former ideas been changed? (4) What is my conclusion? (5) How shall I apply this knowledge practically?

Where there are absentees, the meeting opens as usual and proceeds according to the "Order of Meeting." Valuable time need not be lost in wondering why persons are not present, and those attending can have a profitable meeting. There is no formal program dependent on the presence of certain people. Prior to the next meeting, remind absentees to come, or even ask members to call for and bring them to the meeting.

### DUES AND EXPENSES

Ordinarily, there should be no dues in discussion clubs. Each member purchases his own textbook, which becomes his property. The cost may vary from ten to fifty cents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Excerpts from The Religious Discussion Club, published by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, N.C.W.C., 1312 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C., 28 pages, 5c.

### PREFACE

There is always a place for books which explain the doctrinal and sacramental structure of the Catholic Church. The truths of our faith are as old as the Church itself, but they need restatement from time to time for the countless inquiring souls who are seeking to find and understand the Church which Christ established on earth. The credentials of the true faith and the means by which it may be found are admirably presented in this work, *The Faith of Millions*.

This book by Father O'Brien cannot fail to aid many within and outside the Church. I wish for it the large circle of readers which it merits and I pray that it may bring many to a fuller understanding of the life of the Catholic Church and a greater participation in the Divine Life which it diffuses.

† WILLIAM CARDINAL O'CONNELL,  
Archbishop of Boston.

November 18, 1937



## INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of the Christian Religion until now its teachings have been explained and defended. In the middle of the Second Century Justin Martyr warded off the attack of Jews and showed that Christianity is the perfection of the Old Law and that Jesus is the Messiah. Along the same line Tertullian and St. Cyprian published their defense of Christianity.

The bitter opposition of the pagans elicited apologies by Athenagoras in the last quarter of the Second Century and the "Apologetic" of Tertullian a few years later.

Tatian in his "Discourse to the Greeks" in the middle of the Second Century; Theophilus and Minucius Felix towards the end of that Century attacked polytheism and upheld Christianity.

Origen, in the middle of the Third Century, like Lactantius in the first part of the Fourth Century, and, finally, St. Augustine in the first quarter of the Fifth Century, warded off the blows of Celsus, Porphyrius and various heretics of their time.

Passing over the Christian apologists, who, during the Middle Ages, fought the good fight of Christianity against Mohammedanism, we come to the period of the upheaval during the Sixteenth Century.

Amongst the expounders and defenders of Catholic truth against the so-called Reformers, St. Robert Bellarmine is an outstanding figure. As many as seventy-five chairs of Theology in Protestant schools were established to refute him.

The title of Bossuet's famous book "Variations" is of itself like an army in array. Availing himself of Tertullian's saying that truth is one and unchangeable, error manifold and ever in flux, Bossuet pointed out that the principle of private judgment as a rule of faith was logically bound to result in a great variety of Protestant churches; and that, as time went on, the solvent of private judgment would continue to split Protestantism. His prophetic words have been fulfilled. One has but to recollect that in our own country there are over five hundred different Protestant sects, no two agreeing with each other.

Milner's volume, entitled "End of Controversy", is known to English-speaking readers and for years exerted an influence.

Cardinal Gibbons' book, "The Faith of Our Fathers", was the compilation of instructions in Catholic doctrine, which he delivered as a young Bishop, throughout the State of North Carolina. He spoke in courthouses, public school houses, music halls, and, in a word, wherever he could get a hearing. One element of the success of his book is that it is not polemical, but expository.

His book is still useful, especially in the country parts of the United States, where Protestantism has adherents.

But in the last half century, according to official statistics of our Federal Government, there has been a great falling off amongst Protestants, so-called; 60 per cent of them attend no church and belong to no Christian denomination.

Accordingly, the controversy with the Catholic Church has shifted its ground; and now the Catholic apologist is called upon to defend such basic doctrines of Christianity as the Incarnation, Virgin Birth of our Saviour, His resurrection from the dead and His divinity.

In spite, therefore, of the many able apologists for Catholic truth, who have arisen in the course of ages, there is need of meeting present day attacks. For, although the target is ever the same, namely, the Catholic Church, the grounds and weapons of attack change with the passage of the years.

Father O'Brien's volume entitled "The Faith of Millions" is up-to-date. Following in the footsteps of Cardinal Gibbons, he has adopted, not controversy, but exposition; and from personal experience in dealing with non-Catholics, particularly university students, he sets forth Catholic teaching on all the moot questions now occupying thinking minds in the matter of religion.

The reader will find that the chief qualities of Father O'Brien's exposition of Catholic truth are simplicity, clearness, cogency of reasoning and a sympathy for those who are groping after the truth.

In an efficient manner it meets the needs of the day in matters religious and should have a wide circulation and yield a copious harvest.

† D. CARDINAL DOUGHERTY,  
Archbishop of Philadelphia.

December 7th, 1937.

## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

The purpose of this volume is to present in a simple straightforward manner the credentials and the teachings of the Catholic Faith. It seeks to show that it is the duty of every person to endeavor to find out which is the Church established by Jesus Christ to guide him in the achievement of eternal life.

This is a question of prime importance, which must be answered to the best of one's ability if one is to live an intelligent life. No amount of absorption in other matters can justify the life-long neglect of this important matter. For upon the answer given to this question hinge consequences of a far-reaching character—consequences that reach into eternity.

The appeal is not to the emotions and prejudices of the reader but to his reason and conscience. The author asks of the reader but a single favor—that he bring an open mind to the investigation of the most important matter which life presents. God never fails to give light to those who seek the truth with honesty and singleness of purpose.

In the preparation of this book, the author has had the valuable advice and counsel of Cardinals as well as of many bishops and priests, whose names are too numerous to be mentioned here, but not too numerous to be treasured in his grateful heart.

The author hopes that this volume, which has been for him a labor of love, will prove helpful to his fellow countrymen and to the people of every land in their earnest search for "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." That it may be in some small way a "pillar of the cloud by day" and a "pillar of fire by night," guiding the groping feet of earnest pilgrims into the promised land of religious truth and certainty, where the mists no longer confuse nor the shadows obscure the vision of Christ and His teachings, is the author's daily prayer. If it leads but one soul into the bark of Peter and thus guides him safely to the feet of Christ, the author will be more than repaid for his years of labor in the completion of this volume.

JOHN A. O'BRIEN.

January 13, 1938.

17 Tim. 3:15.  
Exod. 13:21.



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## Part I.

### WHICH IS CHRIST'S TRUE CHURCH?

The Answer of Scripture, History and Reason



## Chapter I

### THE QUEST FOR RELIGIOUS TRUTH

As I am a stranger to you, dear friend, who read these lines and am one whom you will probably never know personally, perhaps it may be permissible for me to state that I present the teachings of the Catholic faith to you in a spirit of friendliness and good-will. If I were a narrow-minded zealot without sympathy or love for those who differ from me in their religious views, I would scarcely be honored with the repeated invitations which have come to me to speak in the various Protestant churches of the community in which I live, concerning the practices and belief of the Catholic Church. Neither would I have received a gold Knights of Columbus pin in 1925 from *Acacia*, a fraternity composed exclusively of Masonic students at the University of Illinois, as a token of appreciation of the influence which they esteem I have exerted in the interests of friendship and good-will between Catholics and non-Catholics in the community in which I minister. I mention these facts in an objective manner with no thought of personal glory, simply that you may believe me when I say that this exposition of the credentials of the Catholic Church comes to you from a heart full of love and good-will for you.

In unfolding the teachings of the Catholic Church in the pages which follow I could have no possible motive for misleading you. Like my brother priests, I ask no temporal reward, no earthly consideration of any kind. If I deceived you by misrepresenting the teachings of the Church, and sought by such dishonest methods to win your espousal, then I would be offending the God of Truth and laying myself open only to condemnation.

The only motive which prompts me to set before you in plain simple language the teachings of the Catholic religion is the desire to enrich your life with the saving truths and the spiritual helps provided for us by Jesus Christ for the

sanctification of our souls and the attainment of our eternal salvation. Because I feel that it is a great treasure, the pearl that passeth all price, I want to share it with you, my fellow citizen. We are bound together by the ties of a common love for our common country. Because I love my country and because I know that in the teachings of the Catholic faith she has an unfailing source of support in all the crises that may confront her, I am anxious to disseminate among my countrymen a correct understanding of her doctrines.

While all souls are essentially equal in the eyes of God, and all are infinitely precious to Him, I must confess that the task of spreading a knowledge of Christ's teachings among my own countrymen makes a greater natural appeal to me and seems to have first call upon my affections and my loyalty than even the apostolic work of carrying it to the people in the Orient. That is most important, indeed, and I view with profound admiration the heroic missionaries who wear out their lives in foreign lands in breaking the bread of truth to the natives there. With about sixty millions of my fellow citizens, however, bound to me by the strong ties of a common love for our country and of a common tongue, who are unaffiliated with any Christian Church, I feel the special urgency of the obligation of sharing my treasure with my own immediate neighbors and countrymen—inviting them first of all into full membership in the household of the faith.

#### *Not Propaganda*

In so doing, my efforts are not to be viewed as those of a propagandist in the sense in which that term has come to be used since the World War. In those hectic days our country and those of the Old World as well were flooded with propaganda designed to portray the opposing forces and all their works in a wholly evil light. The aim seemed to be to increase our own morale by inducing us to hate the enemy with a more intense animosity. We know now that much of the propaganda consisted of lies, half-truths, highly colored accounts of alleged atrocities, and a suppression of the enemy's version of all occurrences. When we discovered, after the armistice, how much of the propaganda was color-

ed and distorted, and how many falsehoods had gained currency and respectability under the camouflage of patriotic propaganda, we rightly developed a distaste for the propagandist who seeks to influence the belief of people by a one-sided unfair presentation of evidence.

I share that distaste. I would never wish to lead a person into the Catholic faith by a misrepresentation of the credentials of either the Protestant or the Catholic religion. No Church, I think, has suffered more from such misrepresentation than my own. I have nothing but abhorrence for those who indulge in such unscrupulous and dishonest tactics. Consequently there will be no effort on my part to minimize the strength of the Protestant viewpoint by inaccurate statements, nor to strengthen the cogency of the Catholic credentials by a misleading presentation of facts or arguments.

My appeal will be to the intellect, not to the emotions. For, the end desired is not a temporary commitment arising from an emotional appeal, but that permanent loyalty which results only from a true intellectual conviction. It alone can weather the storms and trials of a lifetime. There will be no importuning, no high-pressure salesmanship. Among the several hundred whom I have been privileged to receive into the Church, I have never yet asked a single one to embrace the faith. I explain it, and leave it to the choice of the individual to accept or reject in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience. For faith implies the free assent of the will after the intellect achieves conviction. Without freedom and internal conviction there can be no real faith, but merely its outward shell.

The aim will not be to destroy but to upbuild. While here and there it may be necessary to indicate what we regard as the inadequacy of the credentials of non-Catholic denominations, it will be done only for the purpose of showing more clearly the logic and the adequacy of the Catholic viewpoint. Lines of cleavage in the two viewpoints will be pointed out, but always in an objective and impartial manner.

It is surely possible to discuss points of difference in a thoroughly impersonal manner, with a complete absence of ill-will toward those who take a contrary view. In fact I



have in my heart nothing but good-will and affection for all my fellow American citizens regardless of their religious faith or lack of it. I can think of no more sincere expression of that love than my desire to share with them a religious faith which has brought peace and happiness to my own life, and which I know will bring the same to theirs.

### *An Open Mind*

May I suggest then, dear friend, that you begin your investigation of the Catholic faith with an open mind? It will make your study immensely more profitable. For, if you start with a closed mind, saying to yourself, "I know in advance these teachings are all wrong; I'll simply listen to them but I'll be trying all the while to find a way of escape from their conclusions," you will not be playing fair with yourself. You will derive more profit if you honestly try first to understand the doctrines of the Catholic religion and the reasons behind them. Let them sink into your mind and have free play therein until they exert the influence which their cogency demands. Then it will be time enough to examine them critically. I have had persons in my inquiry classes who have cheated themselves by devoting more of their mental energy to finding arguments against a viewpoint of the Church than to the mastering of the reasons upon which the viewpoint was based. In order to do justice to any subject matter, be it science, literature, philosophy, or religion, it is necessary that the effort be made first of all thoroughly to understand it and the reasons underlying it.

The Catholic Church asks no more and no less. For she is convinced of the objective weight and cogency of her credentials when correctly understood. She buttresses them with no appeal to the emotions. She is perfectly willing to have them stand or fall, be accepted or rejected on their own intrinsic merits. She is convinced that if they are looked at by the eye of reason, unclouded by the mists of preconceived prejudice, they will carry conviction to the open mind. As unerringly as the magnet draws the steel, so does truth attract the human mind when no obstacle is placed in its way. Prejudice, bitterness, antipathy are the obstacles which rob truth of its capacity to convince, by closing the gateway to the mind.

When you stop, dear reader, to reflect that your previous associations have been largely, if not almost exclusively, with non-Catholics from whom you have imbibed almost unconsciously their prejudices and viewpoints, you will readily see how imperative it is that you try to divest yourself for the time being at least of these influences which will impede the even functioning of your mind in the effort to secure a correct and if possible even a sympathetic insight into the teachings of the Catholic faith. Forget the vicious charges you have heard hurled against her. Forget the slanders and the calumnies uttered by her enemies. Remember even the prisoner at the bar is innocent until proven guilty. Look only at the facts, the evidence in the case, and make your decision accordingly.

### *Loss and Gain*

In embracing the Catholic faith consider your loss and your gain. In comparison with your gain of the one, true faith of Jesus, and the assurance of eternal salvation if that faith is lived up to, any sacrifice that you may be required to make will seem trivial indeed. You will retain all the truths of divine revelation which you already possessed. You are not asked to give up any of your family or friends or sever any of the warm ties which unite you with the associations of a life time. Instead of weaning you in any way from your old friends or relations, you are asked to love them even more. You do not surrender the dignity of your manhood or womanhood nor the sanctity of your own conscience. You take upon yourself merely the sweet yoke of the gospel of Christ, which brings peace to your troubled soul. For it was He who said: "Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

You gain, on the other hand, the greatest treasure in life. "You acquire," as Cardinal Gibbons has so beautifully pointed out, "a full and connected knowledge of God's revelation. You get possession of the whole truth as it is in Jesus. You no longer see it in fragments, but reflected before you in all its beauty, as in a polished mirror. While others are outside, criticizing the architecture of the temple, you are inside, worshipping the divine Architect and saying devoutly

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 11:28.

with the Psalmist: 'I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth.' While others from without find the stained-glass windows only blurred and confused figures without symmetry or attraction or meaning, you from within, are gazing with silent rapture on God's glorified saints, with their outlines clearly defined on the windows, and all illuminated with the sunlight of heaven. Your knowledge of the truth is not only complete and harmonious, but it becomes fixed and steady. You exchange opinion for certainty. You are no longer 'tossed about by every wind of doctrine,' you are firmly grounded on the rock of truth. Then you enjoy that profound peace which springs from the conscious possession of the truth."

In re-entering the Church, it is worth remembering that you are but returning to the household of your fathers. For it was in the bosom of the Catholic Church that your ancestors lived and worshipped for many long centuries before Protestantism saw the light of day. The fireside and the furniture may seem new to you, but they are sanctified with the associations of the forbears of all the Christian people in the world today. Before the altar in the Catholic Church, your forefathers knelt in worship of our Eucharistic Lord, at the baptismal font their children were baptized, in the same confessional they received pardon for their sins, and at the rail they received the same Lord in Holy Communion. At the time of the religious upheaval in the sixteenth century, many of them strayed away. But like the true mother that she is, the Church has never closed the door but has left it ajar, hungering for the return of all her children to her bosom.

She bears no malice toward the children of the wayward sons who left her. She is willing to forgive and forget. She invites you to come back like the prodigal son in the gospel to the home where alone true happiness is to be found. She is ready to place the garment upon your shoulder, the ring upon your finger, to set before you the banquet of love and give to you the kiss of peace. In the tender embrace of your spiritual Mother you will feel repaid for any sacrifice you may have made. Like the penitent Augustine you will find yourself exclaiming: "Too late have I known thee, O

Beauty ever ancient and ever new, too late have I loved thee."

Once you perceive the beauty and the truth of the Church's teachings, and the powerful aid they will afford you in living an upright life, allow no obstacle to deter you from embracing the faith of Christ. Neither the fear of displeasing relatives or friends, nor the persecution of enemies, nor the loss of any earthly possessions, should have any weight, when compared with the achieving of your eternal salvation. "For what doth it profit a man," asked our divine Saviour, "if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"<sup>1</sup> God grant that when you stand before the judgment seat of the Almighty you may have the joy of knowing that you answered that question aright.

In this supremely important task of finding the religion of Jesus Christ, prayer is not less necessary than diligent study. You are dealing with sublime truths, conceived not by the finite minds of men but by the omniscient mind of the eternal God. You should approach this task not in a spirit of intellectual pride or arrogance, but humbly as one who needs and who invokes the divine aid in its successful accomplishment. One might know the whole Bible from the first verse in Genesis to the last one in the Apocalypse without thereby becoming a religious man. Prayer which lifts the mind and heart into communion with God is needed to supplement learning to make a person truly religious. Let me suggest, therefore, that you pray earnestly, from the beginning of your study to its completion, that God may give you the light to see the truth and the strength and courage to follow it unto the end.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Official Statement of Faith*

In view of the many agencies circulating misstatements about the belief and practice of the Catholic Church, is it any wonder then that you, my dear non-Catholic friend, have been influenced in your attitude toward her? Indeed it would be rather a cause for marveling if in mingling freely

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 16:26.

<sup>2</sup> It is suggested that you learn by heart the prayers in the appendix and say them devoutly each day for light to see the truth and strength to follow it.



with non-Catholics for many years you did not hear some of these allegations against the Catholic faith. It is not even unlikely that by dint of repetition you have come to believe that there must be some foundation to them. Where there is so much smoke, there must be some fire, one is apt to say.

To determine then whether the representations of Catholic belief and practice given out by critics are correct or false, is it not necessary to have recourse to some duly authorized exposition of the Catholic faith? Open any book approved by the Church as containing an accurate statement of Catholic belief, and see if you can find anything remotely resembling some of the false statements given out by her enemies. Surely if you wish to find out what the Church really teaches, you will go to her, not to her opponents. She makes no effort to conceal any of her doctrines, but on the contrary publishes them in every language, and instructs her ministers to preach them in season and out of season—even from the housetops. Any priest, any educated Catholic will tell you gladly and without hesitation exactly what the Church believes. In practically every Catholic home, you will find an authorized catechism or a book explaining the doctrines of the Church.

If you wish to receive a thorough and complete exposition of every Catholic teaching and practice, as well as the reasons behind them, go to a priest. He has made them the study of many years, and has consecrated his life to the exposition of such teachings. There will be no charge. It will be for him a labor of love. He has no interest except to present aright the teachings of our Blessed Lord as handed down and preserved unchanged by our holy Mother, the Church.

This is a day of specialists. Why not avail yourself of a specialist in religion? Unlike the specialists in medicine, the priest offers his expert services gratis. He receives his reward in knowing that he has substituted light for darkness, has replaced misunderstanding with a clear knowledge of the truths revealed by our divine Redeemer for the enlightenment and salvation of mankind.

"There is no Freemasonry," as Cardinal Gibbons has pointed out, "in the Catholic Church; she has no secrets to keep back. She has not one set of doctrines for bishops and

priests, and another for the laity. She has not one creed for the initiated and another for outsiders. Everything in the Catholic Church is open and aboveboard. She has the same doctrines for all—for the Pope and the peasant."

### Discussion Aids

Why should the teaching of the Catholic Church be disseminated among our countrymen? In presenting these truths, should the appeal be to the intellect or to the emotions? What is to be said of high pressure salesmanship in this matter? What is the advantage of an open mind in approaching the truths of religion? Discuss the loss and gain for those who embrace the Catholic faith. What course should one take who is interested in learning the doctrines of the Church?

#### Practices:

Be objective in explaining Catholic doctrine; never lose your temper.

Be in earnest about your Catholic faith, your greatest gift. Try to share it with others.

Say a prayer every day for the spread of the faith.

## Chapter II

### WHY INVESTIGATE THE CATHOLIC RELIGION?

There is no subject which is more worthy of investigation than the Catholic religion. It has exercised a profound and enduring influence upon the thought and the life of humanity. No person can aspire to be truly educated, who remains ignorant of the one institution in the world today which traces its origin directly back to Jesus Christ. Founded by our divine Lord in the year 33 A. D., the Catholic Church has continued in existence throughout nineteen centuries, carrying on her divinely appointed mission of preaching the gospel of Christ to every nation under the sun.

At the present time the Catholic Church numbers 431,428,009 human beings—the largest religious organization in the world today.<sup>1</sup> While her members are of every race and tongue, having different racial temperaments and diverse national traditions, they are all bound together by the strong bond of a common faith. They believe the same doctrines, receive the same sacraments, and recognize the same spiritual head. The unity is not merely in name, but in reality. A Catholic can hear Mass, receive the sacraments, and assist at the devotions in any Catholic Church in the world, and feel as much at home as if he were worshipping in his own parish church.

During the World War it was a source of surprise for many of our young men drawn into the army from rural districts and small towns, where there were few Catholics, to discover that the one Church they could be certain of finding in practically every village and city in Europe was the

<sup>1</sup>Statistics given in the Catholic World Atlas, prepared and published at the request of Pope Pius XI by F. C. Streit. A summary of its statistics appearing in The Sign, February, 1936, p. 391, gave as the number of Catholics in all Europe 208,381,598; All America 199,096,803; All Asia 16,585,812; All Africa 5,329,455; Australia and Islands 1,584,541. Total 431,428,009.

Catholic Church. Other churches, familiar enough in the United States, were found to be almost unheard of in the countries of Europe.

While it was a source of comfort for the Catholic soldiers to be able thus to continue the practice of their faith in any country in Europe, it was also the occasion of affording many hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens a new insight into the world-wide character of the Catholic Church which would have been scarcely possible for them to secure within the narrow horizons which bounded their previous outlook. For the first time they got glimmerings of a religion that is truly international and interracial and which sinks its roots deep into the history of Christendom. In other words, they went far along the pathway which leads to the discovery of that most essential truth: *Catholicity and historical Christianity are identical.*

#### *Catholicity is Historical Christianity*

The only form of Christianity—save for a few heretical sects that have cut themselves off from the centre of unity and almost withered away—that can be found in the history of Christendom for the first sixteen centuries is the Catholic Church. Blot her from the pages of history, and the Bible as well as Christianity disappear from the face of the earth. Neither would Protestantism exist. For Protestantism is founded upon the private interpretation of holy Scripture. And since the books of the Bible constituting both the Old and the New Testament were determined solely by the authority of the Catholic Church, without the Church there would have been no Bible, and hence no Protestantism. The Catholic Church is therefore the one central fact in the religious history of Christendom.

Not only is the Catholic Church the largest religious organization in the world today, but it is the only institution that has survived the fall of the Roman Empire. When that great world empire fell beneath the successive onslaughts of the vast hordes of barbarians that poured in upon her from the North and the East, the Church proceeded to Christianize and civilize them. In literal truth, she made the captor captive. In so doing she clearly showed that her mission was not merely to the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans, but to all



mankind. At this early date she displayed the Catholicity inherent within her very nature by opening her arms as wide to the barbarian Vandal, Visigoth, or Hun as to the mighty Roman or the cultured Greek. That mark of Catholicity or universality she has always clung to, as being the very imprint of the Divine upon her.

How can one then justly claim to be educated who is ignorant of the history of the institution which has been the most potent single factor in shaping the life and the thought of Western civilization? She established schools and universities throughout the world and inspired painters, sculptors, and musicians in the achievement of their masterpieces. She fostered a love of literature and encouraged investigation of the secrets of nature and thus laid the foundations of modern science. As that penetrating student of the history of human culture, Eugene Savage, Professor of Art at Yale University, aptly declared in a recent lecture at which I was present: "All that separates the white man from barbarism is the Christian Church." That Church, as I have pointed out, is the Catholic Church since she is the only Christian Church which can trace her existence through those ages of transition back to Christ Himself.

Is it not to be expected that a Church which spans so many centuries, which is so intimately interwoven into the daily life and thought of hundreds of millions of people, and which colors their whole outlook and shapes their sense of values, will be at times misunderstood and misrepresented? Not only is it evident that at times her teachings are misunderstood but also that at other times they are deliberately misrepresented by hostile critics who wish to curtail her growth and influence. It is so much easier to set up a man of straw, and with much gusto demolish it, than it is to face a real foe. To this temptation many critics of the Church, seeking to refute her claim to the universal allegiance of mankind, have fallen easy victims.

#### *Common Misrepresentations*

As evidence of this, I would ask my non-Catholic reader, if he has not heard one or more of the following widely-spread misrepresentations of Catholic belief and practice: 1. The Catholic Church forbids her members to read

the Bible. 2. Priests charge money for absolving penitents in confession from their sins. 3. Priests claim that for certain money payments they can secure the release of departed souls from purgatory. As one friendly narrator explained it to me, "For a certain fee, a priest will lift a soul from the bottom pit of purgatory to a place near the top. Then for a little more money he will lift the soul out altogether." There are many more slanders of this nature, widely circulated and apparently believed by millions of our separated brethren. But these will suffice to indicate the general derogatory nature of such misrepresentations.

Of course, as every Catholic knows, there is not a particle of truth in any of the statements. And yet, in my 25 years of experience in conducting inquiry classes for many hundred persons, I have never encountered a class in which the majority had not been assured of the truth of the above mentioned falsehoods. These inquirers were drawn largely from a University constituency, and might fairly be presumed to come from homes somewhat better informed than the average. The saddest part is that some report hearing such statements from the pulpits of Protestant churches. Does it not seem almost incredible that ministers pledged to preach the gospel of the Prince of peace and of truth should so prostitute the pulpit of their churches as to render it a vehicle for the imparting of falsehoods and calumnies against their Catholic neighbors?

Do you recall, my dear non-Catholic reader, hearing such representations of Catholic belief from the lips of a minister in a Christian Church? If you do, you can be sure that he is an unreliable herald of the gospel of Christ. For either he was in good faith and believed such preposterous statements to be true, or else he was in bad faith and deliberately circulated a canard which he knew to be false. Now if he was in good faith, he was guilty of criminal negligence in not using ordinary prudence and diligence to ascertain the truth or falsity of charges seriously reflecting on the good name of many millions of his fellow citizens. If he looked into any one of the thousands of books approved by the Church as containing a correct exposition of her belief and practice, or if he consulted any well-informed Catholic, he

would speedily satisfy himself as to the complete falseness of such charges. On the other hand, if the minister knew at the time that they were unfounded and reflected merely the hatred of her enemies, and used his Christian pulpit for the further circulation of such slanders, you can see for yourself how far such an individual has deviated from the path of the true word of Christ. For all such heralds are charged by Christ speaking through the solemn words of St. Paul: "Carefully study to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly handling the word of truth.*"<sup>1</sup>

The utilization of the machinery of the various non-Catholic churches, the Sunday-school, the church paper, and evangelistic organizations directed by ministers, reached its climax in the Presidential campaign of 1928 when for the first time a Catholic was nominated by one of the two major parties for the presidency. The extent to which ministers and evangelists throughout the country used their pulpits to deliver political tirades against Governor Smith not merely because he was opposed to the Prohibition Amendment, but because he was a Catholic and "in league with the Pope," was reported in the press of the nation at that time and was shown to be very widespread. Especially in the churches of the South, the traditional stronghold of the Democratic party, were the denunciations of Smith and his Catholicism most scathing and vigorous.

Professor Schlesinger of the Department of History at Harvard University has collected large numbers of church papers, pamphlets, periodicals, and leaflets distributed by the millions, which are teeming with vile cartoons of nuns, priests, bishops, and the pope, and with vicious slanders of Catholic belief and practice. These were exhibited in a room at Harvard, known as the "Hall of Horrors". They will be preserved to show future generations the extent to which Christian churches used their pulpits and their official publications to poison the minds of millions of people with vile calumnies against twenty millions of their Catholic fellow citizens. A somewhat similar collection of photostatic copies of such church publications and cartoons is being preserved

<sup>1</sup>2 Tim. 2:15.

at the Library of the University of Illinois, where it is available to all who wish to view it.<sup>1</sup>

That there were many laymen as well as ministers who discountenanced such wholesale use of the machinery of the church to spread religious prejudice and foment hatred among the citizens of our country is undoubtedly true. Here and there noble voices were upraised in Protestant pulpits by ministers who refused to be swept away by the wave of hysteria and emotional bitterness that was sweeping like wildfire across our land. Rising above the din and tumult of the mob, they proclaimed the duty of truthfulness and denounced the widespread slanders that were being circulated in the name of religion against Catholic aspirants for public office.

### Illustrations

The reaction of many high-minded non-Catholic citizens is illustrated by the following instance narrated to me by an educator of note. "I was the principal of a public high school," he said, "in a town in Illinois at the time of the Smith-Hoover campaign. From the pulpits of the three Protestant churches in that town there came tirades against Mr. Smith. It was not merely," he said, "because he opposed the present Prohibition Law, but because he was a Catholic and 'would take his orders from the Pope'. The animus against him as a Catholic was evident throughout the denunciations. Besides the three Protestant churches," he said, "there is also a small, struggling Catholic church. About three months before the election, the priest there read to his congregation a letter from the Bishop. It stated that, in accordance with the usual Catholic custom of separating religion from politics, no single word was to be spoken in the church concerning the political campaign then in progress.

"The contrast was striking. The temptation to fight back against those who were calumniating his religion must have been great; he took no notice, however, of them. He used his time each Sunday morning to preach to his people about Christ. Never once did he urge his congregation to take sides in the campaign that was then stirring the nation. Never once did he attempt to dictate or to indicate even by

<sup>1</sup>Book of Horrors compiled by Bishop J. F. Noll.



inuendo how his people should vote. Father," he said, "I am a Protestant, and have been active in the work of my church. But I don't know of anything that has depressed me more than the spectacle of our churches rushing into the political campaign, using their pulpits for the fomenting of religious prejudice. It has robbed me of my enthusiasm for them and alienated almost all my attachment for them. Whether I shall ever recover it, only time will tell."

Shortly after the close of the Smith-Hoover campaign, I was honored with an invitation to address a large Methodist congregation on "Papal Infallibility and its Bearing upon the Rights of the State." In the period for answering questions that followed the lecture, a young man arose and made the following contribution to the discussion. "In the small rural community in which I live," he said, "the feeling ran high that if Smith were elected, America would be subject to papal domination. I recall one citizen telling another of the woes that would befall us. 'Why,' he said, 'the Pope will be the real ruler. He will dictate all the appointments to Smith. He will even try to get control of the Supreme Court. Things will be so bad,' he concluded, 'that before we know it, we won't be able to get our mail until it has first been censored by the Pope.'"

Such were the apprehensions which prevailed among millions of our fellow citizens in the event of Smith's election to the presidency. This, in spite of the fact that in the century and a half of our national existence there has never been a single instance of a Catholic proving false to his civic duties because of any pull exerted upon him by his religious faith. No matter how much men like Charles Marshall and H. L. Mencken may speculate about a theoretical conflict of civil and spiritual loyalties on the part of Catholics, the stark fact remains that no Catholic incumbent has ever yet discovered any obligation arising from his Catholic faith at variance with that which presses inexorably upon his conscience to discharge to the full the duties of his civil office. Far from finding any impediment to the fulfillment of his civic duties, the Catholic office holder has found in the teachings of his Catholic faith the strongest incentive to their faithful and conscientious discharge. And, it is to be noted that Catholics have held every important office in the

land, being Governors of States, Congressmen, and Senators, Chief Justices of the Supreme Court—every office save those only of the Presidency and Vice-Presidency. Surely if there were any incompatibility between their civil allegiance and their spiritual loyalty, some one of the multitudes of Catholics, who have held office in the course of our national existence, would have discovered that fact by now.

In the light of the performance of so many ministers and evangelists who leaped into the limelight with their blood-curdling recital of the secret machinations of Rome to control and capture America, misrepresenting the simplest tenets of the Catholic faith, one can see more clearly the foundation of the frank and courageous statement of Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University:

"Many of these theological students have no college training whatever, and many more have had a college training, in whole or in part, which would not differ greatly from that offered by an average secondary school. In other words, the standard of intellectual and scholarly attainment is low. Not a few of the most distressing and widely-heralded of present-day happenings in the United States are traceable directly to this fact. Unhappily that 'illiterate ministry' which it was the purpose of the pious founders of Harvard College to forfend, is now, after three hundred years, in ample evidence on every side. . . . If the full truth were said, it would probably be that the greatest obstacle at present to religious faith, religious conviction, and religious worship is the attitude and influence of a very large proportion of the poorly endowed and poorly educated Protestant clergy."<sup>1</sup>

In citing the statement of President Butler, and in pointing out non-Catholic agencies which have lent themselves to the circulation of misrepresentations of Catholic belief and practice, I do not for a moment wish to appear in the light of making sweeping reflections upon the Protestant ministry as a whole. That would be grossly unjust. There is no doubt in my mind that the number who consciously lend themselves to such unfair practices are in the marked minority. The overwhelming majority would surely repudiate such un-Christian actions. I want to pay my tribute to the

<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the President of Columbia University, 1925, pp. 50 and 51.

honesty and sincerity of the Protestant ministry as a whole. Indeed the ministers with whom it has been my privilege to work in the University community in which I labor, have been men of high spiritual ideals, eminently fair and uniformly courteous.

It has been my rare privilege to address large congregations in Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Disciples of Christ Churches, setting before them the teachings of the Church on such subjects as Papal Infallibility, the Power of the Priest to Forgive Sin, the Relations of Church and State, the Temporal Power of the Pope, the Indissolubility of Christian Marriage, the Structure and Organization of the Catholic Church. In every instance I found the people hungry and eager to know the real teachings of the Church. After the lecture I answered questions from the audience. The entire discussion was always conducted in a spirit of friendliness and good will. In every case the meeting was closed with an expression of gratitude to me for clearing away many misconceptions of the teachings of the Church which they had previously entertained.

It was the conviction of all that a better understanding of the faith of Catholics, so often misrepresented and misunderstood, was conducive to a better community spirit and therefore to better citizenship in our American democracy. For an understanding of the real teachings of the Church speedily removes the basis of societies of organized bigotry, which spring into existence from the apprehensions and distrust created by the misrepresentations of the Catholic position, especially on such a topic as the alleged divided allegiance of Catholics to the government of the United States. The true weapon against them is not force or heat, but light. For with the widespread dissemination of the real teachings of the Catholic Church, they disappear because the falsity of their charges becomes apparent.

From what has been said, I think you will see, my dear non-Catholic friend, that in setting before you the credentials of the Catholic faith, I am actuated not only by a love of the Church which has been so bountiful and loving a Mother to me, but also by the love I bear my non-Catholic fellow citizens and our common country. To advocate the reasonableness and truth of the teachings of the Catholic Church

is surely compatible with both esteem and affection for my countrymen of different faiths and of no faith at all. I write as no narrow bigot or partisan propagandist when I set before you in a calm, impersonal manner the faith of Jesus Christ and of the Apostles. I leave the decision entirely to your own reason and conscience. Nothing could be fairer than that.

### Discussion Aids

What credentials has the Catholic Church that make her doctrines worthy of investigation? What is the membership of the Church according to the Catholic World Atlas? Could you explain to a non-Catholic that Catholicity and historical Christianity are the same? How? Discuss some common misrepresentations of Catholic doctrine. Show that a presentation of the truth is the most effective way of answering such misrepresentations.

### Practices:

Meditate on the tremendous truth that the Son of God instituted the Catholic Church.

Take your membership in a discussion club seriously and learn the doctrines of the Church so well that you can explain them to others.

Pray for Catholic missionaries and help them financially when you can.



### Chapter III

## FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF OUR FAITH

The Catholic Church teaches that there is one God in three divine Persons, equal and distinct, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This is called the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, a truth not against our reason but above it. We believe it because it has been divinely revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. God the Father is the Creator of the world, Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of mankind, and the Holy Ghost is the Sanctifier.

Our Christian faith teaches that Jesus Christ is divine in His personality and possesses two distinct natures, human and divine. "He is God of the substance of the Father, begotten before time", says the Athanasian Creed formulated in the fourth century, "and He is Man of the substance of His mother, born in time."

In order to redeem us from our sins, the Son of God became incarnate, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and was born in a stable at Bethlehem on Christmas day over nineteen hundred years ago.

The first thirty years of His life were spent in comparative obscurity with Mary and Joseph in the humble home at Nazareth. Christ then began His public ministry, selecting twelve men who are called Apostles to assist Him in the propagation of His teachings. He "went about doing good," healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansing the lepers, and raising the dead to life. Throughout Judea the Saviour went preaching a gospel of peace, justice, mercy and brotherly love that embraced even one's enemies.

After three years of public ministry, during which He schooled His Apostles in the truths He had come upon earth to teach, He was crucified on Mount Calvary. By His sufferings and death He offered to the eternal Father full atone-

ment for the sins of mankind. "He was wounded for our iniquities: He was bruised for our sins. . . and by His bruises we are healed."<sup>1</sup>

To commemorate the day on which Christ died for love of us, we abstain from flesh meat on Friday. It is a little act of salutary mortification by which we endeavor to show our love and gratitude to our Redeemer and like St. Paul "to bear about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies."<sup>2</sup>

We reverence the cross because it was the instrument of our Saviour's crucifixion. It surmounts our churches and adorns our altars. "Far be it from me," says the Apostle, "to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> We begin and end our prayers by making on our person the sign of the Cross, while we say: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." That this is an ancient custom is evident from the words of Tertullian who lived in the second century: "In all our actions, when we come in or go out, when we dress, when we wash, at our meals, before retiring to sleep, . . . we form on our foreheads the sign of the cross. These practices are not commanded by a formal law of Scripture, but tradition teaches them, custom confirms them, faith observes them!"<sup>4</sup> In making the sign of the Cross we profess our faith in the Trinity, the Incarnation and in the Redemption—three of the basic truths of the Christian religion.

On Easter Sunday the third day after his death, Christ rose from the dead, thus giving the most striking and demonstrative manifestation of His divine power. After forty days during which He appeared several times to the Apostles instructing them further in the faith, Christ ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives. Ten days later on the feast of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, our Saviour sent the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles while they were assembled in prayer. The Apostles were thus divinely strengthened to fulfill the mission given to them by Christ "to preach the Gospel to every creature." It was on Pentecost Sunday that

<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 53:5.

<sup>2</sup>Cor. 4:10.

<sup>3</sup>Gal. 6:14.

<sup>4</sup>Gibbons: *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 2.

the Apostles began their sublime mission, and from that day we date the active life of the Church.

Christ taught that there is a heaven and a hell. "Come ye blessed of my father," said Christ, "possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."<sup>1</sup> "Eye hath not seen", says St. Paul, "nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."<sup>2</sup> The supernatural happiness of Heaven consists in the union of the soul with God through the beatific vision. "Now we see in a mirror, obscurely; but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am known."<sup>3</sup> In the next life union with God is heaven, separation from Him forever is hell.

The suffering of hell, according to the common teaching of the Church's theologians, is twofold: the pain of loss, and the pain of sense. The pain of loss consists in the eternal separation of the soul from God and the realization that this separation is due to one's own fault. This is the chief punishment of hell. "Perhaps the pain of homesickness," says Dr. J. M. Cooper, "is as near to this pain of loss as anything we suffer here on earth. Here we do not miss God, so to speak. We have on earth all sorts of distractions and interests. But at death we leave all such interests and distractions behind."<sup>4</sup>

Concerning the detailed specific nature of hell, says Father B. L. Conway, "the Catholic Church has defined nothing. . . It is useless to speculate about its true nature, and more sensible to confess our ignorance in a question that evidently exceeds human understanding."<sup>5</sup> While our Lord did not see fit to disclose to us the specific details concerning the nature of heaven and hell, other than that the one means union with God and the other separation from Him, the fact of their existence cannot be denied without denying the authority of Christ Himself.

We have said that Christ came to redeem the world from sin. There are two different kinds of sin, original and

actual sin. Original sin is inherited from our first parents, being the state into which we are born as a result of their fall. Original sin is, therefore, the privation of sanctifying grace.

Actual sin is any wilful thought, word, deed or omission contrary to the law of God. Actual sin is of two kinds, mortal and venial. A mortal sin is a grievous offense committed with sufficient reflection and with full consent of the will. It is so called because it robs the soul of sanctifying grace, which is its life, and thus brings spiritual death to the soul. A venial sin is a slight offense, that is, the deed done is not serious, grievously wrong or, if it be the latter, it is performed without sufficient reflection or without full consent of the will. For example, if a person steals a newspaper, he commits a sin of injustice. But as it does not constitute a grievous wrong, it would be but a venial sin. If, however, a larger amount, say several hundred dollars, were stolen, that would constitute a grievous injustice, and therefore a mortal sin.

Christ came upon earth to redeem mankind from all their sins. That is why He is called *Jesus*, which means *Saviour*. He established a Church to propagate His teachings and to transmit to all mankind the blessed fruits of the Redemption. The marks, which distinguish Christ's Church from all those founded by men are four—unity, sanctity, Catholicity and Apostolicity.

#### *The Marks of the True Church*

As the sailor out on the boundless deep has the compass and the North star to guide him safely through the darkness of the night over the mighty expanse of sea into his true harbor, so the searcher after truth has marks to guide him out of the darkness of error into the Church founded by Christ. These guiding marks must be certain and plain, otherwise they might mislead the searcher after truth. Accordingly, Christ has invested the Church founded by Him with four unmistakable characteristic marks whereby it might be known.

First, let us consider its unity. Christ founded His Church when He gave the great commission to His Apostles, saying: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 25:24.

<sup>2</sup>I Cor. 2:9.

<sup>3</sup>I Cor. 13:12.

<sup>4</sup>Religion Outlines for Colleges, Vol. 2, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup>The Question Box. p. 388.



Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." That phrase, "all things whatsoever I have commanded you," demands faith in all His doctrines without exception. If there is an obligation on the part of the Apostles and disciples to preach the Gospel, there is the corresponding duty on the part of the faithful to embrace it. Christ makes this obligation explicit when He says: "Preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned." Furthermore, He tells them: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." St. Paul emphasizes the necessity of this unity of faith when He tells the Galatians: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema . . . For I give you to understand, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

This unity of faith is found in the Catholic Church throughout all of the countries of the world—in her and in her alone. The Mass at which Catholics assist every Sunday is the same Mass that is celebrated in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and everywhere under the sun. For we are members of a mighty organization that encircles the globe, and all under the one visible head—the Pope of Rome, the successor of St. Peter.

The second mark is sanctity. By this we mean that the Church is holy because her Founder, Jesus Christ, is holy and the source of all holiness; because her end is to make men holy; because her dogmas and her sacraments are holy in themselves and lead to holiness; and finally, because she has produced in all ages members distinguished by their eminent sanctity, some of whom have shed their blood in far-off lands for the faith of Christ. With her, sanctity is placed above all temporal goods, and men and women leave father and mother, brother and sister, and home and lands, and all that the

<sup>1</sup>Gal. 1:8-12.

world holds dear, to carry the teachings of Christ to the far corners of the world. Here is the sacrifice sublime which surpasseth the wisdom of the world, the living proof of the Church's holiness.

Moreover, St. Paul tells the Ephesians: "Christ loved the Church and delivered himself up for it that he might sanctify it; . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is the mark of the Church of Christ, which as Christ said, is "the sign that shall follow them that believe."

### *Catholicity*

The third mark of the Church is her Catholicity. Catholic means universal. For since her foundation the Church has existed in all ages and among all nations and has everywhere taught the same doctrines. Here we have, what to my mind, is one of the most striking and unmistakable proofs of the divine origin of the Catholic Church in the cold historical fact that for more than fourteen centuries after the death of Christ there was no Christian Church in existence save the Catholic Church. The few heretical sects that arose during that time withered and died away, while the Catholic Church alone existed throughout all Christendom. Of the many various sects that exist today, none of them can trace its origin back to more than a few centuries at the most. Hence, it must be evident to all that they cannot have Christ for their Founder, since they did not even exist at that time, nor for more than fourteen hundred years after His death. This is a point that does not demand any subtle reasoning nor prolonged study to see. It is a plain historical fact which all who run may read.

I cite it not in a critical spirit, but in a friendly manner, as the most evident truth of history. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, has come down to us through all the ages, from the moment when Christ said to His Apostles, "Teach ye all nations" to the present time. The tide of time rolling down through the centuries has engulfed full many a human institution and the rust of ages has eaten into all the edifices erected by the hand of man. Kingdoms, thrones and empires

<sup>1</sup>Eph. 5:25-27.

have risen, have grown strong and powerful, only to fall and lie buried in the dust of ages. But both the ravages of time and the wear and tear of centuries stand powerless against the Catholic Church, ever ancient, yet ever fair and young. And why is this so? Why is she the sole exception to all the laws of human decay? It is because she is not merely human, but divine. Divine in her foundation, divine in her teachings, she is human but in her membership. The Church has stood the test of ages and today in a world of changing fads alone stands immutable and unchanged, because Jesus Christ has kept His promise when He said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

The historian, Macaulay, non-Catholic though he was, felt compelled by the facts of history to pay the following tribute to the Church's defiance of the laws of decay which have sung the requiem of the great institutions of the past: "There is not, and there never was on the earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church. The history of that Church joins together the two great ages of human civilization. No other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when camelopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian Amphitheater. The proudest royal houses are but of yesterday, when compared with the line of the Supreme Pontiffs. That line we trace back in an unbroken series from the Pope—who crowned Pepin in the eighth; and far beyond the time of Pepin the august dynasty extended till it is lost in the twilight of fable. The republic of Venice came next in antiquity. But the republic of Venice was modern when compared with the Papacy; and the republic of Venice is gone, and the Papacy remains. The Papacy remains, not in decay, not as a mere antique, but full of life and useful vigor. The Catholic Church is still sending forth to the farthest ends of the world missionaries as zealous as those who landed in Kent with Augustine, and still confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila. . .

"She saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to

see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain, before the Frank had passed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigor when some traveler from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's." Such is the tribute of history.

### *Church is Apostolic*

Furthermore, the Church is apostolic. By apostolicity is meant that the doctrine is the same as that taught by the Apostles, and that the succession of rulers dates back to the Apostles and to their head, St. Peter. Apostolicity of doctrine follows as a logical consequence of the Church's unity of belief. Indeed, when that gifted scholar, John Henry Newman, then an Anglican Divine at Oxford, set out to disprove the Church's claim to apostolicity of doctrine, he consulted the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, such as St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom and others who lived in the first five centuries. He examined the writings of these early Christians on such points of doctrine as the sacraments, the Real Presence, the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, confident that he would find a disagreement between their writings and the teachings of the Catholic Church in England in his day. And what was the result? So striking was the agreement, yes, the identity of doctrine which he discovered, that he perceived that there could be no shadow of doubt that the teachings of the Catholic Church were the teachings of the early Fathers, of the Apostles, and of Christ Himself. It was this clear proof of the Church's apostolicity of doctrine that brought that brilliant mind into the fold, though it cost him the sacrifice of his friends and relatives, his position and worldly gain. And with him came over such a distinguished number of Oxford scholars that the movement has gone down in history as the *Oxford Movement*.

These, in short, are the four marks which will guide the searcher after truth to the Church founded by Christ. These are the bright beacon lights that will guide the pilgrim in his search for truth into the true fold. Indeed, so clearly and so



unmistakably are they the marks of the Catholic Church that she holds that any one who approaches this subject with an open, unbiased mind, and studies it carefully, cannot fail to be convinced of the divine character of the Catholic Faith. She asks no one to enter without first being convinced of the truthfulness of her claims, confident that Christ has stamped upon her the unmistakable sign of her divine origin and the indelible seal of His abiding presence. But when that truth is realized, may no temporal motive or fear of worldly loss keep the inquirer from entrance into the Church of Jesus Christ.

### Discussion Aids

What is the teaching of the Church on the Trinity? How many Persons are in the Trinity? How many natures? Is belief in the Trinity against our reason? How many Persons are there in Jesus Christ? How many natures?

What was the mission of the Son of God among us? Sketch briefly the background of His life on earth. Discuss the following in relation to the accomplishment of His mission: I. The Crucifixion: a. Friday abstinence; b. our reverence for the Cross; II. The Resurrection (confirming miracle of divine power). III. Ascension (in order to send the Holy Ghost). IV. Pentecost (divine life instilled into Church). What is the teaching of the Church on heaven? On hell? On sin?

What are marks of the Church? Are they inherent in the nature of the Church or did Christ make them and superimpose them as labels? Could the Church be the true Church of Christ lacking any one of the marks? Discuss unity and catholicity together. Test the persistence of these two marks through 1900 years as a miraculous phenomenon. Can men sanctify themselves without divine aid? Is the finger of God evident in all four marks of the true Church?

#### Practices:

Make the Sign of the Cross without haste and with reflection.

Make a Morning Offering of all your thoughts, words, and deeds in union with Christ for the salvation of the world.

Be regular and devout in going to the sacraments, thus displaying your faith in the teaching of the Church.

## Chapter IV

### PRIVATE JUDGMENT AND RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENTISM

#### *The Origin and Development of a Common View*

The person interested in discovering the religious viewpoint prevalent in America today has but to advert to the utterances he hears on all sides—utterances repeated with such frequency as to become accepted as axioms. Every reader will recall such as the following: "It doesn't matter much what a man believes as long as he is sincere and does what is right." "Religion is not a *creed* to be *believed* but a *way to live*." "All religions are about equally good. They are all but different roads to the same destination." "Don't worry about differences in creed. The important thing is to live right, to keep the golden rule." "A man will be judged not by the doctrine he believes, but by the life he lives."

Whatever phrasing these slogans assume there is a kindred sentiment running through each of them, and all find a common agreement in their rejection of the importance of belief in the dogmas of religion. Indeed, the very word "dogma" has come to produce an unpleasant reaction in the popular mind, and to put a doctrine in ill repute one has but to brand it with that label.

Before undertaking to hold up the above mentioned slogans to the light of reason and common sense, it will be profitable to trace the genesis of this sentiment now so rampant in America. A brief glance at the factors responsible for its origin and development will go a long way toward enabling a person to fathom the mystery by which a concept, unknown for practically sixteen centuries of the Christian era, has gradually come to gain the ascendancy in the religious thought of the American people.

#### *Truth Told Without Rancor*

In prosecuting this investigation into the origin, nature, and credentials of religious indifferentism, it may not be

amiss to state at the very outset that it is my intention to treat the subject in a thoroughly frank, but impartial scientific manner. While at times I may feel compelled by the laws of logic to express a vigorous dissent from the principles of indifferentism, I do so with a complete absence of ill will, and with nothing but sentiments of kindness and good feeling toward all my fellow Americans, who may hold contrary views. Scholars of every shade of philosophic and religious thought recognize that a discussion in which fundamental disagreements are expressed on religious views, may be conducted in an impersonal manner, without engendering the slightest vestige of rancor.

There is no logical reason for carrying differences in philosophical or religious views over into the altogether disparate domains of personal and social relationships. Hence, the reader, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, will remember that when at times I express a vigorous disagreement with some of the principles of *indifferentism*, I have in my heart only friendship and affection for the *indifferentist*. For, the aim of the discussion is to add not a jot or tittle to the sum total of the world's rancor, but to lessen it by clarifying the present confusion in religious thought in America, by showing the clear dictates of logic when applied to prevalent viewpoints in religion.

#### *Origin of Principle of Private Interpretation*

When Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, on October 31, 1517, nailed his ninety-five theses to the doors of the Church at Wittenburg, and later proceeded to establish a religion of his own, he set loose in the religious world a principle which was destined to produce consequences far beyond the ken of himself or his fellow reformers. It was the principle of the supremacy of private judgment in the interpretation of the Scriptures and as a guide in the religious life. Not that Luther, Calvin, Zwinglius, or any of the other so-called reformers following immediately in their wake conceived for a single moment of this principle as one that would ultimately be invoked by the maker of every new creed as the basis and justification of his procedure. Luther believed that his *own* interpretation of the Scriptures was the only correct one—all the others were wrong. Calvin placed the same

degree of overwhelming confidence in his own private judgment. So, likewise, Zwinglius, Melancthon and the rest.

Far from being indifferentists in religion, these reformers were fanatics, each believing his own particular creed was correct, and willing to persecute unto death all who contumaciously held a contrary interpretation. Far from being the founders of religious tolerance, as a modern myth is fond of picturing them, the reformers set an example of intolerance and persecution which in cruelty and fanaticism has seldom, if ever, been equalled in the long annals of Christendom.

Insisting with despotic finality that his judgment be accepted as supreme in all matters of religion, Martin Luther pronounced every one who differed from him in doctrine a heretic, condemning him in coarse and vulgar language. Thus he writes: "Whoever teaches otherwise than I teach, condemns God, and must remain a child of hell."<sup>1</sup> And again: "I can hear and endure nothing which is against my teaching."<sup>2</sup>

#### *The Intolerance of the Reformers*

When the peasants, led astray by Luther's example of the private interpretation of Scripture to suit one's fancy, sought to carry out their own ideas of the meaning of the Bible, thus provoking the Peasants' War, Luther turned on them with savage ruthlessness, urging the nobles to kill these "children of the devil" and to track them down like dogs. His advice was followed literally. Thousands of these poor peasants were murdered with atrocious cruelty. In one of the letters of Erasmus,<sup>3</sup> the number of slain is placed at 100,000. Far from regretting such an orgy of wanton human slaughter, Luther prided himself upon it saying: "I, Martin Luther, slew all the peasants in the rebellion, for I said that they should be slain; all their blood is upon my head. But I cast it on the Lord God, who commanded me to speak in this way."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Saemtliche Werke XXVIII, 346.

<sup>2</sup>Works, ed. Walch, VIII, 1974.

<sup>3</sup>Epis. 803.

<sup>4</sup>Werke, Erl. edition LIX, p. 284 Table Talk; see also Grisar, Vol. III, p. 213.



Instead of becoming gentler and more tolerant with age, Luther grew more rancorous and vituperative. A short time before his death he wrote two frightfully abusive pamphlets. One was "Against the Papacy, founded by the devil at Rome," the other was against the Jews. The frontispiece in the first pamphlet was a shockingly vulgar picture of a piece with the contents. This production, the German historian, Doellinger, termed "a document whose origin can scarcely be explained otherwise than by supposing that Luther wrote the most of it when under the influence of intoxicating drink."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Persecution of Jews*

His attack against the Jews likewise bristles with vile epithets, such as, "young devils damned to hell." He summoned his followers in Germany "to burn down Jewish schools and synagogues, and throw pitch and sulphur into the flames; to destroy their houses; to confiscate their ready money in gold and silver; to take from them their sacred Books, even the whole Bible; to forbid their holding any religious services under penalty of death; and if that did not help matters, to hunt them out of the country like mad dogs!"<sup>2</sup> It was in this spirit of bitter hostility and intolerance toward all who held a single theological viewpoint other than his own that Luther persisted until the final curtain fell.

After a painstaking study of the reformer's life and writings, that impartial student of history, John L. Stoddard, formulates the following conclusion concerning Luther's attitude toward freedom of conscience: "It is commonly said that Luther inaugurated the right of free investigation. Nothing is less true. He *talked* of it, as a reason for abandoning the traditions of the Church, but he did his utmost to bring about complete subjection to an unassailable Bible as he interpreted it! He instituted thus a Pope of printed paper, instead of a Pope of flesh and blood. Moreover, since he constituted himself the authoritative interpreter of the Bible, he practically claimed for himself infallibility. One of Luther's contemporaries, Sebastian Frank, wrote despon-

<sup>1</sup>Doellinger, "Luther" p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>"Luther's Works," Vol. XX, pp. 2230-2332.

dently: 'Even under the Papacy one had more freedom than now.'"<sup>1</sup>

This tyrannical attitude in matters of conscience was not confined to Luther. It prevailed among the reformers following in his footsteps. It was implicit in the system. For, in order to secure any coherence in his ranks, it was necessary for each reformer to set up his private judgment as supreme and absolute, and to insist upon all his followers moulding their judgment in conformity with the pattern which he designed for them. Otherwise there would have been no unity within the organization, but instead there would have been as many creeds as there were individuals exercising their private judgments.

#### *Examples*

Take Calvin, for example, as he may be said to typify in this regard the attitude of the whole swarm of so-called reformers following in Luther's tracks. In his letter to Aubeterred, Calvin claimed infallible authority, regarding himself as the mouthpiece of God, saying: "God has conferred upon me the authority to declare what is good and what is bad."<sup>2</sup> In consonance with this premise, he demanded death by fire or sword for all who differed from him. His long imprisonment of his theological opponent, Servetus, and his subsequent burning of him to death over a slow fire, casts a lurid light upon the kind of religious freedom which the reformers brought into the world.

Nor was the case otherwise with the early settlers of America. Braving the perils of the sea to find in the New World the religious liberty denied them in the Old, the Puritans straightway proceeded to display violent antagonism and intolerance toward all who sought to worship God in a manner different from them. The voyage across the Atlantic brought a change of skies but not of mind. Like the individual reformers the Puritans regarded religious liberty as a boon for themselves, but as an evil for all who disagreed with them. Hence the heretic in America found himself receiving from the hands of the early colonists the same hostile treatment that was his portion in the Old World. The early

<sup>1</sup>Stoddard, J. L., *Rebuilding a Lost Faith*, pp. 97, 98.

<sup>2</sup>"*Letters Francaises*," Vol. I, pp. 363.

history of the colonists in America wrote but another chapter in the age-old story of the persecution of the dissidents by the dominant religious group.

### *The Swing of the Pendulum*

How is it then that there has come to dominate the thought of the great masses of people in America a philosophy of religion which is the very opposite of the one prevailing for eighteen centuries in Europe and for many years in the history of America? Why is it that apparently the majority of American people will give ready assent to the declaration of the popular lecturer that, "it doesn't matter what a man believes; all religions are equally good; creeds don't count, it's the life that one lives that matters," when their ancestors for centuries believed that orthodoxy of creed was of paramount importance? Why is it that denominational lines are so blurred, with even professing members worshipping in a church of one denomination on one Sunday and in one of a different creed on the next?

America has recently had the amazing spectacle of a prominent Baptist minister, the Rev. Dr. Harry E. Fosdick, serving as the regular preacher in a Presbyterian Church in the nation's metropolis. The spectacle no longer amazes. On the contrary, the only amazement caused the general public was the action of a conference of Presbyterian ministers in rudely presuming to question the orthodoxy of the Baptist preacher's views in the light of the Presbyterian creed. The general consensus of editorial comment in the nation's press was that the action of the Presbyterian ministers in protesting that there was such a thing as a difference between a Baptist minister's teaching and the Presbyterian creed was in the eyes of the general public simply a case of "much ado about nothing." Whence has come this complete swing of the pendulum from an absolute insistence at the cost of life itself upon the paramount importance of doctrinal orthodoxy to a complete disregard, which at times almost approaches contempt, for religious dogmas and denominational creeds?

### *The Supremacy of Private Judgment*

To understand how the viewpoint of religious indifferentism, with its flabby thinking, with its obvious contradic-

tions, with its sentimental effervescence, with its negation of the first principles of logic and the dictates of common sense, with its implicit denial of the validity of objective criteria of truth and error, could yet become the dominant philosophy of religion among the people of America, it is necessary to recall the principle which Martin Luther ushered into the religious world.

It is the principle of the supremacy of private judgment in the interpretation of Scripture and as a guide in the religious life. While Luther at first formulated it as a principle to be used by others, he later wished to reserve its application to his *own* judgment. But his example proved more powerful than his words. It became infectious. Little did he foresee apparently that he was unleashing a hydra that was destined to divide his own sect into twenty-one different divisions, and that has brought—and is still bringing—more disintegration and division into Christianity than all the heresiarchs before or since his time. Like the fabled serpent, Hydra, that had nine heads and grew two more for every one cut off, this principle gives birth to two new sects whenever two members of a denomination disagree, by constituting the private judgment of each dissident supreme and beyond appeal. The five hundred and more different religious sects making up Protestantism today are but the mature fruition of Luther's principle of the supremacy of private judgment in religion.

Let us analyze the implications of this principle. Clearly contained therein is the implication of the invalidity of *objective criteria* for the determination of truth. The criteria have become purely *subjective*. For according to the principle which Luther exemplified in the formation of his creed, that is to be accepted which appeals to the individual, and rejected if it does not. Thus when Luther found that St. James in his epistle set forth the teaching that faith without works is dead, he promptly called it an "epistle of straw" and threw it overboard. Why? Because it does not make the same forceful appeal to him as his own doctrine of salvation by "faith alone."

For a similar reason he arbitrarily inserted the word "alone" after the word "faith" in the passage of St. Paul to

<sup>1</sup>Rom. III:28.



make it square with his pet doctrine. When reproached for this, Luther offered simply his own will and pleasure as complete justification for his procedure. That it may be evident to all that the writer is not imputing to Luther a reason other than the one which Luther assigned, we will quote his own words: "You tell me what a great fuss the Papists are making because the word 'alone' is not in the text of Paul. If your Papist makes such an unnecessary row about the word 'alone', say right out to him: 'Dr. Martin Luther *will have it so*,' and say 'Papists and asses are one and the same thing.' *I will have it so, and I order it to be so, and my will is reason enough.*"<sup>1</sup>

Instead of subscribing to the viewpoint of the modern indifferentist that it does not matter much what a man believes, as long as he does what is right, Luther held almost the direct opposite, namely, that it does not matter much what a man does as long as he believes aright.

In throwing overboard all objective criteria for the determination of religious truth, Luther enthroned the subjective reaction of the individual with all its whims and caprices as the dominant principle in the establishment of a doctrinal creed. But when subjectivism is made the cardinal principle in any system of belief, there is left no rational means by which error can be demonstrated, or the vagaries of a capricious nature effectively checked. For, each individual finds in his own *subjective reaction* a sufficient reason for his religious faith. It has become supreme and infallible, and beyond it there is no court of appeal. For, it is in the same domain as taste and fancy, concerning which philosophers have long maintained it is futile to dispute.

It is not probable that Luther had any clear perception of the intrinsically divisive implication of the principle he introduced into the religious world. Principles, however, have a peculiar habit—especially when permitted to function for a sufficient length of time—of gradually bringing to the surface in explicit form, implications which were lurking under cover, unperceived and unsuspected. As Cardinal Newman with profound penetration has pointed out: "Principles

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by J. L. Stoddard, *Rebuilding a Lost Faith*, pp. 191-192.

will develop themselves beyond the arbitrary points of which you are so fond, and by which hitherto they have been limited, like prisoners on parole."<sup>1</sup>

### *The Fruits of Private Judgment*

It is this principle of subjectivism, namely, the supremacy of private judgment, which has been working as a leaven in the bosom of Christianity for four centuries, and which is responsible for the present widespread disintegration and anarchy that has torn Protestantism into hundreds of different warring creeds, making soviet Russia with its Bolshevik revolutions seem, in comparison, like a model of orderly government. It is this principle which has spread ruin and chaos throughout Christendom, making the divisions in Christianity a laughing stock in the eyes of the pagan world, and causing them to exclaim to the missionaries sent to convert them: "When you Christians can first agree among yourselves as to the true religion, then come and impart the truth to us—but not before." It is this principle of subjectivism that is responsible for the sloughing off of clearly defined dogma, the blurring of denominational lines, and the making of religion a matter of the feelings and emotions.

Throwing aside the chart and compass of reason and the north star of a divinely established teaching authority, this principle plunged the bark of religion upon a dark and stormy sea, tossed about by the tempests of subjective feelings and the passions that stir ceaselessly within the human breast. It is this principle which is the prolific mother of modern religious indifferentism, in which vague half-truths and obvious contradictions dressed up in pleasant sentimental garb are eagerly pressed to the bosom without so much as being questioned for their credentials.

When Rebecca wished to secure for her younger son, Jacob, the blessing and the birthright which Isaac intended for the elder son, Esau, she clothed Jacob with goat's skin, that it might appear to the blind father's touch like the coarse skin of Esau. Isaac, hearing the soft voice of Jacob and feeling the rough skin of Esau, voiced his perplexity.

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Newman, *Prospects of the Anglican Church*.

saying: "The voice is indeed the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."<sup>1</sup>

So the person who holds up to the light of reason and of objective reality the common utterances of the indifferentist that "all religions are equally good and true" will be compelled like Isaac to recognize the dual character of the subject confronting him, and say: "The statement as an intellectual assertion is perfectly false, but the sentiment is kindly and agreeable. It has the voice of Jacob, but the covering of the beloved Esau."

### *Not Logical, but Popular*

The philosophy of religious indifferentism which prevails in America today cannot be explained as the resultant of any sustained effort in logical reasoning. Its roots must be traced back to the principle of subjectivism which Luther introduced into the world in making the private judgment of the individual autonomous and supreme in matters of faith. For, if the principle of subjectivism be admitted then the subjective reaction of the individual, with its large core of feeling and emotion, becomes the sole criterion of religious truth and error. If all the creeds produce about the same subjective reaction, the same emotional response, the individual concludes, and quite logically, on the basis of his fundamental assumption, that all religions are about equally good and true. That is why the philosophy of modern religious indifferentism is but the logical sequel of the principle of subjectivism—the twentieth century harvest of the sixteenth century seed.

That this principle of subjectivism is still as dominant in the Protestantism of today as it was in Luther's time is clearly evident from a perusal of Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible, the standard work among modern Protestant scholars. Writing on the inspiration and authority of the Bible as a guide for the individual, A. Steward says therein: "More pressing, perhaps, than even the distrust of criticism which prevails in many quarters, is the search for authority. If the Bible is not to be like an Act of Parliament, operative, 'to the last and farthest extremity of the letter,' how is it to retain that quality which the Westminster Confession ascribes to it

<sup>1</sup>Gen. 27:22.

of being the *final court of appeal* in all controversies of religion? How is the divine and authoritative element to be separated from the human and fallible? How, in fact, is revelation, in the sense of communicated knowledge, possible by means of the Scriptures? . . . Denney quotes with approval the words of Robertson Smith, in which he gives a modern rendering of the testimony of the Holy Spirit: 'If I am asked why I receive Scripture as the word of God, and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the fathers of the Protestant Church: Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us in Him His will for our salvation. *And this record I know to be true by the witness of His spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul.*' Denney, however, clearly perceives what we have pointed out above, that this is a 'doctrine of the Divine message to man,' not 'a doctrine of the text on Scripture.' His view is that coming to Scripture 'without any presuppositions whatever,' without any 'antecedent conviction that it is inspired,' we become convinced that it is inspired because 'it asserts its authority over us as we read,' it has 'power to lodge in our minds Christianity and its doctrines as being not only generally but divinely true.'—its power to do this being 'precisely what we mean by inspiration.'"<sup>1</sup>

But neither Steward, nor Denney, nor Smith throw a single ray of light upon the baffling problem of explaining why so many divergent and contradictory interpretations result from the perusal of comparatively simple passages if each individual reader is really inspired as to the truth contained therein by the Holy Spirit. How can the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, inspire individuals to draw from the Holy Scripture contradictory meanings? In seeking to make each individual inerrant in his reading of the Bible, they make the Holy Spirit the father of lies and falsehood. If each individual feels "assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul," then there remains no external authority to check the vagaries of the

<sup>1</sup>Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by James Hastings, Vol. I, p. 298. Scribner, N. Y.



capricious spirit, for each individual has constituted his own subjective reaction as the final court of appeal. Is it any wonder then that Protestantism continues to this day to be the fertile mother of sects and divisions that it was in Luther's day? For, in its very bosom it still harbors the principle of subjectivism, the principle of division, with no external or objective agency to restrain it from breaking out on its ceaseless rampage.

#### *America—A Stronghold of Religious Indifferentism*

It is interesting to note that the phenomenon just described is peculiarly characteristic of America. In probably no other country in the world is the view that it does not matter what religious creed a man professes so widespread as in our own. In traveling through the various countries of Europe one finds the people surprised on hearing of the not uncommon practice in America of persons attending the services of a particular denomination on one Sunday, and the services of a different church on the next. True, religious indifferentism has filtered through in a small degree into a number of countries, due to a considerable extent to the spread of American travel and to the infiltration of American literature. America remains, however, its true home, and the paradise where it thrives most luxuriously.

The question may be raised, however, as to why America should be the special breeding ground of religious indifferentism. The explanation is to be found in the consideration of the following circumstances: First, the population of this country has become a virtual cross section of the population of the Old World, and a mosaic of its different religions. It has had, therefore, for many years a far greater diversity of religious faiths than any other country in the world. The diversity resulting from the adherents of the various religions in the Old World bringing their creedal viewpoints with them to the New World has been further increased by continued divisions within denominations, and by the birth of many new sects indigenous to American soil. It is an unusual year, indeed, that does not witness the arrival of one or more sects.

The spectacle of over five hundred different sects proclaiming different creeds, each insisting upon certain fea-

tures as important which all the others are lacking, and which it alone has, so overwhelms the ordinary man in the street as to leave him in a daze of bewilderment and confusion. How is he to find time to investigate each of these myriad creeds to ascertain which is the true one? The prospect of accomplishing such a Herculean task simply staggers him. Furthermore, he sees the leaders of all these denominations hopelessly disagreeing among themselves. What is the reaction of the ordinary layman to this Babel of confusion and contradiction? It is as natural as it is inevitable. It is the feeling that it does not matter much after all what a man believes as long as he does what is right. It is the *easiest way of escape* from a difficult and disagreeable task. It is the pleasant path of least resistance—the route chosen by the vast millions of pleasure loving Americans. It is in consonance, too, with the principle of subjectivism in religion.

#### *The Easiest Way*

The second factor in the espousal of indifferentism by the American people as their dominant religious philosophy may be found in the fact that the principal emphasis of this philosophy is upon the action rather than upon the thinking that lies behind the act. It stresses the importance of getting results. In so doing it harmonizes with the national temperament of the American people as a nation of "doers" rather than thinkers. The motor type is regarded with the highest esteem. Functionalism is the prevailing philosophy in business—the philosophy of "getting things done." By this standard a man's success is largely measured. Americans are particularly fond of the scriptural text: "By their fruits you shall know them." We have made it our national shibboleth.

In thus emphasizing the importance of action and conduct the indifferentist is right. For the viewpoint of the religious indifferentist is not completely fallacious. Nothing that is totally erroneous could ever have won the number of adherents which indifferentism has won. It is a half-truth, and it is because of the germ of truth that is in it that it has won its following. While correct in its emphasis upon the importance of conduct, it is myopic and wrong in its neglect and denial of the importance of an objectively sound and

truthful creed as a basis of religious faith. It overlooks the fact that all conduct has its roots in thought. If the thinking is erroneous, the resultant action will not be entirely correct, but will reflect the shortcoming in the thought. It overlooks also the fact that God wishes to be worshipped not only in deed but in thought. He wishes the homage of our minds as well as of our bodies. The indifferentist does not apparently advert sufficiently to that scriptural counsel which expresses so profound a psychological truth: "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

#### *They Lack Religious Instruction*

The third factor may be traced to the fact that in America all denominational creeds enjoy the same political rights. They are all equal in the eyes of the civil law. There is undoubtedly a tendency to carry over this concept of the equality of all creeds from the sphere of jurisprudence to the field of reason and conscience. The tendency toward this carrying over in thought is further increased by the complete exclusion of religious instruction in the public schools, so that the majority of the people of America have but vague general ideas as to definite religious doctrines. Consequently they fall rather easy victims to such specious shibboleths of the indifferentist as: "It doesn't matter much what a man believes as long as he does what is right." "All religions are about equally good." These pass ingratiatingly before their eyes with all the solemn splendor of unquestioned platitudes.

From what has been said thus far, it will be seen that the key to the solution of the perplexing problem of discovering how millions of people in America could espouse the philosophy of religious indifferentism with all its contradictions and inconsistencies, is to be found chiefly in the principle of subjectivism introduced into the religious world by Luther. By making the private judgment of each individual supreme, this principle became the prolific mother of innumerable religious sects. Confronted with the Herculean task of determining which one of these hundreds of warring creeds is really the true Church of Christ, vast numbers of the American people have simply raised aloft the white flag—surrendering to the apparent hopelessness of such a task and

seeking an easy escape by declaring that all creeds are about equally good and that it doesn't matter much anyway what a man believes as long as he does what is right.

#### Discussion Aids

Discuss modern rejection of belief in dogma of religion. What is the historical origin of modern indifferentism. Give Luther's attitude. Trace degeneration of Luther's position on right of free investigation into intolerance and persecution. Discuss example of Calvin and other so-called reformers, noting the transition from insistence upon doctrinal orthodoxy to disregard for creeds.

Sum up the case for private judgment, noting and discussing the results: a. Rejection of objective criteria; b. Adoption of subjective criteria. Discuss the fruits of private judgment as resulting in the development of modern godless states. Name and discuss three factors explaining religious indifferentism in America.

#### *Practices:*

Avoid suspicion of indifference in the practice of your religion and so:

Be on time at Mass.

Assist with devotion by using a missal or prayerbook.

Become a faithful member of some of the Church societies.



## Chapter V

### IS ONE RELIGION AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?

#### *A Plain Answer To a Common Question*

Let us now examine the philosophy of religious indifferentism to see whether or not any rational person can be logically justified in holding it. We shall bring it to trial first before the bar of reason, and then before the tribunal of divine revelation.

In maintaining that one religion is as good as another, regardless of how much the various religions differ from one another, the indifferentist makes an assertion which is opposed to the very first principle of logic and common sense as well. It is a law of logic that contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time. If one statement is true, then all the statements which contradict it are false. Deny this principle of logic and you deny all possibility of correct human reasoning.

Thus, for example, a teacher holds before a class of fifteen pupils a sheet of white paper, asking each pupil to state the color of the paper. He hears fifteen divergent answers. One says it is "blue," another, "red," another, "purple," another, "yellow," another, "green," and so on down to the fifteenth pupil, who alone says it is "white." Let us suppose that the teacher has much affection for every member of his class, that he would tell them that they are all correct, rather than that they are all wrong save one. Suppose then that he were thus to address them after the fashion of the indifferentist: "Children, you are all equally correct. You, who say it is purple, you who say it is red, you who say it is green, and all the rest of you are equally correct with the pupil who says it is white. Each one of you is correct, and no one of you is wrong." While one might not be disposed to question the affection and large-heartedness of such a teacher, every one would be compelled to question his sanity. In giving full rein to the impulses of the heart, he

stifles all the dictates of reason and common sense. He is able to agree with these fifteen divergent answers simultaneously only at the cost of intellectual suicide.

Is it not passing strange how people will recognize the validity of this elementary principle of logic in all the practical concerns of their daily life, and then upon entering the domain of religion promptly proceed to throw it overboard? Yet that is precisely what the indifferentist does. He attempts the same impossible mental gymnastics as the teacher above described.

Do not the various denominations differ from one another just as obviously and flagrantly as the pupils did in their answers? Thus in answer to the question, "How many persons are there in God?" the Unitarian replies "Only One," while the Methodist answers "Three: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Is it possible for any person to say in reply: "I agree with both of you. You are both correct?" Not without destroying all possibility of correct human reasoning.

#### *Differences In Doctrine of Sects*

This instance of difference in doctrine between the Methodist and the Unitarian can be paralleled on down the line among all the creeds. For, each sect constitutes a distinct denomination only because it differs on some one or more important doctrines from all the other creeds. Thus, Baptists reject infant baptism as invalid, while Lutherans regard it as valid; Catholics believe that the Holy Eucharist contains the body and blood, soul and divinity of Our Saviour, while Presbyterians regard Holy Communion as merely a symbol or reminder of Christ.

These are the differences which our Holy Father, Pius XI, in his encyclical on *True Religious Unity*, on January 6, 1928, points out as frustrating all efforts of Pan-Christians at attaining real unity. "Through what agreement," he asks, "could men of opposed opinions become one and the same society of the faithful? How, for example, can they who affirm that sacred tradition is a true source of divine revelation and they who deny it, become members of one church? They who hold that an ecclesiastical hierarchy formed of bishops, priests and ministers is divinely constituted and they

who assert that little by little it has been introduced through conditions of time and events? They who adore Christ really present in the Most Holy Eucharist by that wonderful change of bread and wine called transubstantiation, and they who say that the Body of Christ is present there only by faith or through the sign and power of the sacrament; they who hold that in the Eucharist there is a true sacrifice as well as a sacrament, and they who say that it is only a remembrance or commemoration of the sufferings of Our Lord? They who believe it good and useful to pray to the saints reigning with Christ and above all to Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, and they who pretend that such a form of worship is wrong because it draws from the honor due Jesus Christ, 'the one mediator of God and man.'<sup>1</sup>

"In such great differences of opinions we do not know how a road may be paved to the unity of the Church save alone through one teaching authority, one sole law of belief and one sole faith among Christians. Moreover, we know how easy is the path to neglect of religion, to indifferentism and also to modernism which holds the very same error, to wit: Dogmatic truth is not absolute but relative, it is proportionate to the different needs of times and places and to the various tendencies of the mind since it is not based upon an unchanging revelation, but is to be accommodated to the life of men."

#### *Consequences Are Far-Reaching*

From these fundamental differences in doctrine there flow practical corollaries of far-reaching consequence. For, if the Unitarian be right when he says Christ is a mere man, then the Anglican who esteems Him as divine and so adores Him becomes guilty of idolatry. By the same token, if the Anglican is right, then the Unitarian who denies His divinity, and refuses to worship Him as divine, but treats Him as a mere human, becomes guilty of blasphemy. In other words, the proposition of the indifferentist that all creeds are equally good, means in its concrete significance that vice is as good as virtue, falsehoods as good as truth, and idolatry as good as true worship. It means the obliteration of all objective cri-

<sup>1</sup>Cf. I Tim. 2:5.

teria for the determination of truth and the negation of all human reason.

There may be some, however, who will say that the principle of the indifferentist that one religion is as good as another is valid if applied to the various denominations of Protestantism to the exclusion of Catholicism. Even this expedient will not avail. For, while the principle of private judgment is basic among all Protestant sects, yet they differ from one another in the objective doctrines in which they profess to believe. Thus, the pathetic complaint of Theodore Beza, one of the early reformers of the sixteenth century, is as true now as when he uttered it. "Our people," he bewails, "are carried away by every wind of doctrine. If you know what their religion is today, you cannot tell what it may be tomorrow. In what single point are those churches, which declared war against the Pope, united among themselves? There is not one point which is not held by some of them as an article of the faith and by others rejected as a impiety."<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is seen that when held up to the light of reason, indifferentism stands condemned as intrinsically repugnant, and as obliterating all distinctions between truth and error. We would be justified in resting our case here after having secured such an indictment of indifferentism before the bar of human reason. Because of the importance of the issues involved, however, we shall lay the case before the tribunal of divine revelation. We shall ascertain if the voice of eternal truth speaks in accents different from the voice of human reason.

#### *Christ Was Not An Indifferentist*

Time was when Christians were willing to follow the example of their Divine Master and His Apostles in braving torture and death itself rather than deny or even modify the tenets of their religious faith. For their refusal to deny Christ and offer incense to the idols of pagan Rome, hundreds of Christians in the first three centuries were thrown into the Roman amphitheatre to be torn limb from limb by the savage beasts of the arena, while many others were

<sup>1</sup>Epist. ad Aud. Dudit.



coated with pitch and tar and burned alive to illumine at night the courses for the chariot races of the Romans!<sup>1</sup>

For, still fresh in the minds of these early Christians was that memorable scene wherein Christ had set them the example of unswerving loyalty to the truths of a supernatural revelation at the cost of life itself. The dramatic scene was enacted before the high priest, Caiphas, in the crowded court room of the Jewish Sanhedrin on the eve of His death. Caiphas rising up from his seat addressed Christ with the challenging words: "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ the Son of God."<sup>2</sup>

Now there was a law among the Jews that subjected to capital punishment the person who claimed divine honors. Christ knew full well that if He answered that question in the affirmative He was sealing His own death warrant. He knew also that if He would but deny His divinity the Jews would have no legal charge against Him and He could escape the impending tragedy. In the face of this knowledge, without equivocation or evasion, but with rapier-like precision, the Master answered simply and clearly: "Thou hast said it." And forthwith they led Him out to be crucified.

Hence Christ went to His death upon the ignominious cross rather than save His life by modifying in the slightest degree one single tenet of His teaching. That was the example which loomed up before the minds of the Christian world for centuries, prompting them to an unfaltering loyalty to His teachings, causing them to regard orthodoxy of faith as of supreme importance, and to preclude the acceptance of the viewpoint that it is a matter of comparative indifference as to whether one accepts, rejects, or modifies the teachings for which Christ died.

The procedure of Christ in refusing to soften or tone down His answer to the question of Caiphas to suit the prejudices of the Jewish Sanhedrin is typical of His manner of teaching during His entire public ministry. It is clear, therefore, that Christ Himself was no indifferentist.

<sup>1</sup>Aube, *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise*, p. 99; De Rossi-Duchesne, *Martyrologium hieronymianum*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Matt. 26:63.

### *Indifferentism In the Light of Revelation*

Let us inquire now if Christ imposed the same obligation upon His disciples and all those who would come to the knowledge of the faith through their teaching. In other words, did Christ command the Apostles to teach His exact doctrine, and impose upon their hearers the obligation of accepting all the doctrines taught by the Apostles? If Christ issued this dual command then religious indifferentism stands condemned before the tribunal of divine revelation.

Let us examine, therefore, the very words with which our divine Saviour establishes His Church and commissions the Apostles to preach the gospel. To obviate any objections from our non-Catholic readers, the texts will be taken from the Protestant version of the Bible. These are the words of Christ to the Apostles: "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>1</sup> "And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."<sup>2</sup>

From these words of Christ, a two-fold obligation is evident. First, the Apostles are commissioned to preach the gospel to all nations without exception. Christ came to save the souls of all mankind. He wanted His religion, therefore, to become the universal religion of the whole human race. If any race or even any individual would refuse to accept His religion the aim and purpose of the divine revelation would to that extent be frustrated.

Secondly, Christ imposed upon the Apostles the obligation of teaching the same identical doctrines which He had taught them: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you." In other words, the Apostles were not to teach different doctrines in accordance with the divergent whims and fancies of each individual. On the contrary

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 28: 18-20.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 16: 15, 16.

they were charged to teach "all things whatsoever" Christ had delivered unto them. They were given no liberty, to teach one doctrine and reject another. The entire Christian gospel hung together as one great organic whole. This, they were to impart, without omission or addition, without change or mutilation, to the whole world.

Having established the fact that Christ charged His Apostles to teach the same identical truths to all nations, the question may still remain in the minds of some as to whether Christ made the acceptance of the gospel message obligatory upon the hearers or left them free to accept, modify, or reject the same. It will become evident upon reflection, however, that Christ could not logically confer upon the Apostles the moral power and authority of preaching the gospel to the multitudes without placing upon the latter the correlative duty of accepting it. For, every right implies a corresponding duty on the part of another to respect that right. Hence the solemn delegation to the Apostles of the moral power of teaching with authority would be meaningless and contradictory if Christ did not impose the corresponding obligation on the part of the hearers to receive the message thus conveyed.

#### *Belief In Christ's Teachings—A Command*

We shall not content ourselves, however, with this answer to the question—an answer clearly implied in Christ's mandate to the Apostles. For, Christ Himself has put in explicit form the duty on the part of the hearers, which is implicit in His commission to the Apostles. For, after His charge to the Apostles, He clearly defines the duty of the auditors of the gospel message, by adding immediately: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."<sup>1</sup> From these clear words of Our Divine Master it is apparent that He gave to the auditors no more freedom to reject the teachings than He gave to the Apostles to modify them. He had come upon earth to reveal these supernatural truths, and He made it as mandatory on the part of the listeners to accept the revelation as it was mandatory for the Apostles to preach it. The exponent of the theory that it does not matter much what a man believes finds, therefore, that his theory is the direct opposite of the

<sup>1</sup>Mark 16:16.

teaching of Christ on the necessity of believing the precise doctrines which He committed to the world through the teaching of the Apostles. Not only does Christ insist upon the acceptance of His divinely revealed truths by every hearer, but He makes it the indispensable condition for eternal salvation.

Christ did not stop, however, with commissioning the Apostles to teach his doctrines. To counteract any impression on the part of the Apostles that they were not able correctly to present His truths, and to remove any misgivings that might be felt by the hearers on the ground that the Apostles, being human and fallible, might unconsciously mislead them, the divine Master hastened to assure the apostles of His abiding presence and ceaseless assistance, saying: "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>2</sup> "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you."<sup>3</sup> Hence, while the Apostles of themselves were fallible, Christ gave them the assurance that in the mission of preaching His doctrines, He would be with them all days, safeguarding them from error and stamping their teachings with the seal of His own divine approval. For, in the same manner as the Father had commissioned Him, so He authorized them, saying: "As the Father hath sent me so I send you."<sup>3</sup>

#### *Christ Emphasized Unity of Faith*

Moreover, "this same absolute oneness of faith and religion," as Otten points out, "implied in Christ's commission to His Apostles, is inferred with equal clearness from every reference which He makes to His Church. That Church He always speaks of as one, not as many. He speaks of it as one family, one fold, one city, one kingdom. He builds it upon one foundation, the rock, which is Peter. He appoints but one supreme pastor to feed His lambs and to guard His sheep; but one vicar to whom He gives the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. He seems to have multiplied illustration upon illus-

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 28:20.

<sup>2</sup>John 14:26.

<sup>3</sup>John 20:21.



tration, and figure upon figure, in order to impress upon His Apostles the absolute necessity of unity in the faith."<sup>1</sup>

So insistent was Christ upon unity of faith that the gospels portray Him emphasizing this truth in season and out of season. Thus, on the very eve of His passion, He made it the special object of His prayer: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; that they may be one, even as We are."<sup>2</sup> To make it apparent that He intended this unity not only for His Apostles but for all the countless multitudes who in the ages yet to come would believe in Him, Christ added the significant words: "Neither for these only (the Apostles) do I pray, but for them also that believe in me through their word; that they may all be one."<sup>2</sup>

This dominant emphasis of Christ upon the necessity of unity of faith is reechoed by the Apostles in their teaching ministry. Faithfully indeed did they discharge the sacred mission entrusted to them. With steadfast loyalty to their Divine Master, they exemplified that unity in their own lives and counselled their followers to hold fast to that same unity of faith. Thus the indefatigable Apostle of the Gentiles writes to the Ephesians: "I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith you were called. . . There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."<sup>3</sup>

#### *St. Paul Condemns Lack of Unity*

What can the modern advocate of religious indifferentism say, when confronted with the scorching condemnation of discord in doctrine and the lack of unity in belief, which St. Paul meted out to the Galatians, when he discovered some of them wavering in the faith which He had delivered unto them? "I marvel," he writes, "that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel; only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should

<sup>1</sup>Otten, B. J., *The Reason Why*, p. 300, B. Herder Co., St. Louis.

<sup>2</sup>John 17:11.

<sup>3</sup>John 17:20-21.

<sup>4</sup>Ephes. 4:1-6.

preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again. If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. . . For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man: For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

It is evident, therefore, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in common with the other Apostles, regarded a distortion or modification of any part of the divine revelation as deserving of the severest censures. Of the indifferentist who asserts that doctrinal differences are inconsequential, as all creeds are about equally good, St. Paul says in effect: "Let a man who preaches to you a doctrine different from the gospel delivered to you by Christ and the Apostles, be shunned as a heretic, who would pervert your faith. Let him be regarded as a most insidious danger to your true faith, and if such a one after the first admonition still persists in his heresy, he is to be excommunicated from your midst." These words may sound stern, but they are no more so than the words of the gentle Jesus: "He that believeth not, shall be condemned."<sup>2</sup>

#### *Salvation Outside the True Fold?*

The question may be asked, "Does the Catholic Church believe then that all persons who are not members of her fold will be condemned?" Here a distinction is necessary. There are members of the *body* of the Church, and members of the *soul* of the Church. Those are members of the body of the Church who formally profess her faith, are visibly united to her in her public worship and in the reception of her sacraments. Those, on the other hand, who through no culpable negligence of their own, do not know that the Church is the true Church, but who live up to the lights of their own conscience, are said to be members of the *soul* of the Church. In contrast with these are those who are convinced of the truth of the Catholic Church, but who for some selfish reason fail to profess their faith in her. It is only of these latter, who

<sup>1</sup>Gal. 1:8-18.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 16:16.

remain out of the Church, in bad faith, until death, that the Church teaches that the words of Christ apply: "He that believeth not, shall be condemned."

Of course there rests upon every rational human being the obligation of seeking to find out the true Church. A matter which involves such far-reaching consequences demands the careful study and prudent investigation of every one. Moreover, it is the view of the Church that every person who, with an open mind and without prejudice investigates in a careful and impartial manner, the evidence of her claims to be the one true Church can scarcely fail to be convinced of the truth of those claims. For, the objective evidence she presents is simply overwhelming to the person who looks at it with an eye single to the facts. In the few cases where conviction does not occur, the result will usually be found to be traceable to subjective circumstances, such as latent antagonism and prejudice, which may be unconsciously present, as a consequence of having been taught from one's early youth to regard the Church with hatred—as an evil institution.

While salvation is possible for those who are members of only the soul of the Church, every effort should be made to win them to membership in the body of the Church as well. Why? Because such persons do not avail themselves of the great aids to salvation which Christ offers in His sacraments—especially Penance and Holy Communion. True, perfect contrition without the sacrament of penance will remit sin. But the fact, nevertheless, remains that these two great sacraments are powerful aids divinely established to facilitate the fulfillment of the Christian's supreme task, the attainment of eternal salvation. To bring the beneficent ministry of these two great sacraments to the non-Catholic, and even to the person who may be said to be in the soul of the Church constitutes the mainspring of Catholic missionary endeavor.

#### *The Life of the Religious Parasite?*

A final question remains. "How is it, then," asks the person affected by the viewpoint of the indifferentist, "if membership in the true religion is so essential for eternal salvation, and therefore presumably for right living, that there

are persons who are not members of the Church of Christ, but are professed agnostics who yet lead good lives and are highly respected citizens?" The answer is to be found in the fact that such persons living in a society permeated with Christian ideals are profoundly influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by the moral standards and the code of ethics inspired by the teachings of Christ. It will usually be found, upon analysis, that every trait which commends them in the eyes of their fellow citizens is traceable to the standards of conduct inculcated by the religion of Christ. They are good citizens not *because* of their agnosticism or atheism, but *in spite* of it.

Suppose a boy were to take his sled to the top of a hill two blocks long, and then coast down. After he has reached the bottom of the hill his sled still continues to travel rapidly along the level ground. If a person standing a block beyond the bottom of the hill were to see the youngster gliding rapidly over the level ground and did not raise his eyes to perceive the hill in the background, he might hold the following soliloquy: "What a marvelous invention that must be! A sled that is drawn by no horse, nor propelled by a motor, that yet travels rapidly along on level ground!" The mystery would fade away, however, when once he raised his eyes to the hill in the offing, whence the sled derived its momentum and energy. Coasting along now on even ground, it is traveling on *borrowed* power. So it is with the irreligious person living in a society saturated with Christian ideals and standards. He is running on borrowed power; consciously or unconsciously he is influenced at every turn by the group standards which are in the main the result of nineteen centuries of leavening by the Christian religion.

Such a person is essentially a moral parasite. As Balfour in his *Foundations of Belief* observes: "Biologists tell us of parasites which live, and can only live, in the bodies of animals more highly organized than they. . . . So it is with those persons who claim to show by their example that naturalism is practically consistent with the maintenance of ethical ideals with which naturalism has no natural affinity. Their spirit life is parasitic; it is sheltered by convictions which belong not to them, but to the society of which they form a part; it is nourished by processes in which they take



no share. And when these convictions decay, and these processes come to an end, the alien life which they have maintained can scarce be expected to outlast them."

#### *Difficulty of Reclaiming Irreligious Persons*

Furthermore, when a person without any religious belief falls from the path of rectitude, the task of reclaiming such an individual is immensely more difficult than in the case of his religious neighbor. Why? Because there are so comparatively few functional incentives that can be brought to bear upon his conscience. If the ten commandments be regarded as but temporary laws evolved out of the consciousness of the Semitic race, which have become obsolete, if God's existence is questioned, and the fact of immortality is denied, what basis for the observance of the moral law remains? The individual knows that he can escape the penalty decreed by the civil law, as well as the social opprobrium which generally falls only upon the culprit so awkward as to be detected in his misdemeanor.

With the person of definite religious faith, however, the case is different. Here there is an abundance of supernatural incentives which spring directly from the Christian religion. Unlike the ones decreed by civil legislation, and which are dependent for their efficacy upon clumsy fallible human agents for their enforcement, the sanctions of religion are applied with unerring certainty by the all-seeing eye of Almighty God. The religious-minded individual may be said to have, therefore, a policeman always with him in the form of his own conscience. It was this profound truth concerning the necessity of religion as a firm and enduring foundation for proper moral conduct which Washington voiced in his famous farewell address—a warning which needs to be kept always before the eyes of the people of America: "Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason, and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

Hence a religious faith helps not only to restrain an individual from falling but also to reclaim him if he has vio-

lated a moral law in spite of the protests of his own conscience. "The true Christian," as that careful student of the religious life, Father Bertrand L. Conway, C. S. P., aptly points out, "may under stress of temptation fall into the worst vices of the pagan, and give the lie to his high profession. But no matter how low he may fall, he falls *from a standard*, and you may appeal to him. He has once climbed up the mount of God, and he knows that with God's help he can again reach the summit. But if a man feels confident that every lapse is due merely to the evil of environment, a taint in the blood, or the impelling force of a stronger will, he will not answer your appeal to higher things. He calls evil good, and good evil."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Conclusion*

From what has been said it is evident that religious indifferentism has as its basic underlying principle the subjectivism which Martin Luther brought into the world by the establishment of private judgment as the supreme guide in one's religious life. It is the twentieth century harvest of the seeds of religious chaos and anarchy which were sown by the misguided reformers in the sixteenth century. Indifferentism has become the common philosophy of religion among the great masses of people in America. It serves as an unhealthy sedative, lulling the mind into a sense of false security, and deterring it from the vigorous restless search for objective religious truth. Its falseness must first be exposed in order to gain a hearing for the claims of the Catholic Church to be the one true Church established by Christ and designed by Him as the Church for all mankind. When the implications of religious indifferentism are made clear, it becomes apparent that it is opposed both to natural reason and to divine revelation. It contradicts the elementary principles of logic and the dictates of common sense. Beneath its pleasant surface lurks a virus which is poisoning the American people, making them sick unto death.

It was therefore a timely note which our Holy Father, Pius XI, sounded in his recent encyclical on *Religious Unity* when he pointed out to the nations groping in the twilight of error and confusion, that true religious unity is to be

<sup>1</sup>Best sermons, 1926, p. 145. Harcourt, Brace & Co., N. Y.

achieved not by the external federation of churches while each retains its own doctrinal creed, but by the separated churches returning to the fold of the Mother Church, and embracing again the religious truths of their fathers. There is the tender note of a father's solicitude that echoes in his pleading for the return of the sheep that strayed from the true fold.

"Let these separated children,"<sup>1</sup> entreats His Holiness, "return to the Apostolic See established in this city which the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, consecrated with their blood, to this See, 'the root and matrix of the Catholic Church'<sup>2</sup> not indeed with the idea or hope that 'the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth'<sup>3</sup> will abandon the integrity of the faith and bear their errors, but to subject themselves to its teaching authority and rule. Would that what has not been granted to Our predecessors would be granted to Us, to embrace with the heart of a father the children over whom We mourn in their separation from Us by evil discord. May God Our Saviour 'Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth'<sup>4</sup> hearken to our ardent prayer and vouchsafe to call back all the wanderers to the unity of the church!"

"In behalf of which lofty intention We invoke the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, Conqueror of all heresies and Help of Christians that soon there may dawn that longed-for day when all men will hear the voice of her Divine Son 'keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'<sup>5</sup> You know well how much We want their return; and We desire too, that all Our children know it and not only they of the Catholic world but all who are separated from Us. If they who are separated from Us will ask in humble prayer the grace of God, there is no doubt but that they will recognize the one true Church of Jesus Christ and enter it united at last with Us in perfect charity."

Here is a consummation devoutly to be wished—the restoration of a united Christendom. In the achievement of

<sup>1</sup>Encyclical on Religious Unity.

<sup>2</sup>S. Cyp. Ep. 49 and Cornelium, 3.

<sup>3</sup>1 Tim. 3, 15.

<sup>4</sup>1 Tim. 2, 4.

<sup>5</sup>Eph. 4, 3.

that great objective, the healing of the breaches that for four centuries, and more, have divided the Christian world, there would be removed the sources whence issue much of the misunderstanding and rancors which keep the world in turmoil and unrest.

### Discussion Aids

Analyze indifferentism in the light of human reason. Examine the doctrines of various denominations to show lack of logic.

Analyze indifferentism in the light of divine revelation.

Was Christ an indifferentist? Support your contention with examples from His life.

Examine the Great Charter of Church (Matt. 23: 18-20) for

a. Twofold obligation imposed on the teaching Church.

b. obligation of those taught to accept these teachings.

(See also Mark 16: 15-16).

c. Christ's infallible support of doctrine.

Give two additional examples of Christ's insistence upon unity of faith (John 17: 11, 20).

Discuss St. Paul's teaching on unity of faith, analyzing especially Eph. 4: 1-6 and Gal. 1: 6-13.

Define "body" of the Church; "Soul" of the Church. What is the proper interpretation of "Outside of the Church no salvation"?

What is a religious parasite? A moral parasite? Why is it harder to win an irreligious person than to reclaim a fallen-away?

Summarize the case against indifferentism and for unity as given in author's conclusion.

### Practices:

Form the habit of reading a chapter of the Scriptures daily, thus learning to know Christ at first hand.

Devote some of your material substance, saved preferably from the sacrifice of some pleasure, to a missionary cause.

When permitted your own choice for a term paper or shorter exercise, use a subject concerned with Catholic history or doctrine.



## Chapter VI

### WHICH IS CHRIST'S TRUE CHURCH?

#### *Evidence So Clear That He Who Runs May Read*

When a person, after careful consideration, comes to perceive the fallacy of the common saying, "All religions are equally good and true," and realizes that it does "matter what a man believes," he finds himself confronted with two important questions: 1. Which is the true Church? 2. How can I discover it?

The answer might be obtained by finding out which of the churches possess the marks of unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity. For these are the marks which Christ imprinted upon His Church to distinguish her from all others. It might prove somewhat tedious, however, to examine all of the several hundred Christian denominations to discover if any one of them possess these characteristics.

Moreover, there is a shorter way of answering the query: Which is the true Church? That is by discovering first: Which is the Church founded by Jesus Christ? For if one can discover a Church founded directly and immediately by Christ and a Church authorized to teach in His name, and to which He promised the abiding presence of the Spirit of Truth, then one can be certain that if the true Church is to be found anywhere on the earth, it must be that institution of which Christ Himself is the Founder.

In prosecuting this investigation into the claims of the various denominations to be the true Church, the writer does so with nothing but sentiments of friendship and goodwill toward the members of all these faiths. While he may feel compelled by the facts of history to reject their claims, his dissent will be entirely impersonal and based solely on objective grounds. The writer has in his heart only sentiments of love for his fellow citizens of every race and creed. There is already too much religious rancor in the world. The aim of

this discussion is to add no single jot or tittle to it, but to lessen it by presenting in a friendly and objective manner the facts of history pointing to the establishment of one Church by Jesus Christ.

#### *Our Duty of Searching for the Truth*

In maintaining that the facts of history stamp the Catholic Church as the one true Church established by Christ for all mankind, the writer does not wish to give our non-Catholic readers the impression, already too prevalent, that the Church regards all who are not members of the *body* of the Church as outside the pale of salvation. Indeed, the broad-mindedness and maternal solicitude of the Church for the salvation of all mankind are nowhere more strikingly apparent than in her teaching that people, even though not in visible communion with Christ's true Church, *may* nevertheless be saved if they act according to the sincere conviction of their own conscience. No man is guilty in the eyes of God, says the Church, except him who acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. All people who are true to the commands of conscience are members of the *soul* of the Church, and will be rewarded by God for their fidelity. Even though they are objectively wrong, they are in good faith, and therefore blameless in the sight of God at least for their non-membership in the corporate body.

There is a duty, however, resting upon every one to search for the truth, and thus to enlighten his conscience so that it will honestly reflect the objective realities, instead of the distorted caricatures of the truth which spring from ignorance, prejudice and misunderstanding. The writer asks but one favor of the non-Catholic reader, that he will examine the evidence with an *open* mind. If he will do this, the writer is confident that the facts of history will make the same powerful appeal to his mind that they have made to the thousands of millions of honest men and women who during nineteen hundred years have clung to the Catholic faith as "the pearl that passeth all price."

#### *Catholic Church Founded by Christ*

Turn now to the pages of any reliable history, whether written by Jew, Protestant, Catholic, or non-believer, and you will find that there is unanimous agreement among all

historians that the Catholic Church at least was founded by Christ. The evidence of the holy Scriptures, considered simply as historical documents, is too overwhelming to permit any doubt or quibbling on this point. Let us look at the solemn words whereby our Divine Saviour founded His Church and then clothed it with the power and authority to teach all mankind in His name. The credentials are confined to no one gospel, but are to be found in all four. The words are simple, their meaning is unmistakable. It is Christ Himself who is speaking to the Apostles: "As the Father sent me, I also send you."<sup>1</sup> "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."<sup>2</sup>

These words constitute the evidence of the Church's divinely appointed mission to teach the truths of Christ to all nations. They constitute the charter, which the Church is to present to every generation as the imperishable credentials of her delegation as a duly accredited agency to teach in the name and with the authority of Jesus Christ. That the people hearing this divinely authorized teaching are not to regard themselves as free to accept or reject it is made likewise clear by our Divine Master! "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, will be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned."<sup>3</sup> With equal clarity, St. Luke presents this same insistence of Christ on the duty of the faithful to accept the gospel because of the authority which lies behind it: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."<sup>4</sup>

#### *Christ Commands His Church to Teach*

From these clear words of Christ, it is evident that our Divine Saviour did not follow the procedure imagined by

<sup>1</sup>John, 20:21.

<sup>2</sup>Matt. 28:18-20.

<sup>3</sup>Mark, 16:15-16.

<sup>4</sup>Luke, 10:16.

many people today—the lackadaisical procedure of merely uttering certain religious and moral truths without establishing any institution to interpret and to transmit them to future generations. The idea that Jesus simply enunciated certain truths, and failed to provide any responsible agency for the transmission of these teachings to all mankind, is not only uncomplimentary to the wisdom of Jesus and to His solicitude for the salvation of all mankind, but it also finds no warrant in holy Scripture. To have placed upon each individual who was to be born into the world the task of ferreting out for himself from the mists of the historic past, the precise teachings of Jesus, and the equally difficult task of interpreting them with unerring accuracy, would have been a procedure which would have foredoomed His enterprise to certain and inevitable failure.

For, the overwhelming majority of mankind would have neither the time nor the ability to accomplish so Herculean a task. It is to be remembered that not only was the printing press not then in existence, but that even the art of writing was the accomplishment of few. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Christ ever wrote a line, or that He commanded any of His disciples to write.

On the contrary, His command to the Apostles was to preach, to teach, in season and out of season. This method renders it possible for the teacher to adapt the presentation of the Master's teachings to the divergent capacities of his hearers to understand. It is the one and only effective method for the transmission of Christ's legacy of truth to mankind. It is the method which the Scriptures disclose with unmistakable clearness, that Christ actually adopted. The impression so widespread and prevalent in non-Catholic circles that Christ simply uttered certain truths nineteen centuries ago, and then allows every individual to sink or swim in accordance with his ability to ferret out and to interpret for himself the precise meaning of His teachings, finds no support in the pages of Holy Writ.

#### *Three Fundamental Facts of History*

Hence it is most important that men and women nowadays be brought to realize these fundamental facts of history:

1. *Jesus Christ actually founded a Church.*
2. *He conferred*



upon that Church the jurisdiction and the power to teach all mankind. 3. The Church which Christ founded and clothed with such power and authority is the Catholic Church.

From the above historical facts, there follows with inexorable logic the simple conclusion: The Catholic Church is the one true Church, established by Jesus Christ for the salvation of all mankind. Is there any possible escape from this conclusion? While admitting, as all men must admit, that the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ, some have sought to escape from the above conclusion by alleging that the Catholic Church in the course of ages ceased to teach the pure truths of Christ, introduced error, and therefore is not today to be regarded as the true Church.

But this can only be true if our Saviour broke the promises He made to His Church when He said: "And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," and "upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." If Christ broke those solemn promises, then we can confidently affirm that there is not today anywhere on the face of the earth the true Church of God. That Christ did not break His pledge is evident from the fact that the Catholic Church is the only institution in Christendom which has come down through nineteen hundred years teaching the world today the same deposit of divine truth which she taught to the Greeks and Romans, the Medes and the Persians in the first century.

#### *Christ Has Fulfilled His Promise*

The Church has suffered from kings and emperors, from the days of Nero to those of Lenin and Stalin in our own. In every land her children have suffered martyrdom for the faith. They have braved the executioner's sword. They have faced the wild lions in the Roman arena. They have withstood the burning fagots at the martyr's stake. Neither have they quailed before the firing squads of the modern day.

The Church has witnessed the despoliation of her property by Henry VIII, and the captivity of her supreme Pontiff by Napoleon Bonaparte. But she has not surrendered, either for king or peasant, one single jot or tittle of those divinely revealed truths which Jesus Christ commanded her to pro-

| Date, Place of Origin, the Founders of Chief Protestant Denominations |               |                                 |                    |   | Authority Quoted |
|---|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|---|------------------|
| Name  | of Origin     | Founder                         | Year               |   |                  |
| Catholic Church   | Jerusalem     | Jesus Christ                    | 33. . .            | New Testament                                       |                  |
| Lutheran  | Germany       | Martin Luther                   | 1524. .            | S. S. Schmucker in "History of All Denominations"   |                  |
| Episcopalian  | England       | Henry VIII                      | 1534. .            | Macaulay and other English Historians               |                  |
| Unitarian Congregationalists  | Germany       | Celarius                        | About 1540. .      | Alvan Lamson, Ibid                                  |                  |
| Presbyterian (Old School)   | Scotland      | General Assembly                | 1560. .            | John M. Krebs, Ibid                                 |                  |
| Congregationalists  | England       | Robert Browne                   | 1583. .            | E. W. Andrews, Ibid                                 |                  |
| Baptists  | Rhode Island  | Roger Williams                  | 1639. .            | "The Book of Religions," By John Hayward            |                  |
| Quakers   | England       | George Fox                      | 1647. .            | American Historians                                 |                  |
| Methodist Episcopal   | America       | William Penn                    | 1681. .            | Rev. Nathan Bangs in "History of All Denominations" |                  |
| Free-Will Baptists  | N. Hampshire  | Benj. Randall                   | 1780. .            | Ibid  |                  |
| Campbellites, or Christians   | Pennsylvania  | Alex. Campbell                  | 1813. .            | "Book of Religions"                                 |                  |
| Reformed Methodist  | Vermont       | Branch of the M. E. Church      | 1814               | Ibid  |                  |
| Methodist Society   | New York      | Branch of the M. E. Church      | 1820               | Rev. W. M. Stillwell, Ibid                          |                  |
| Methodist Protestant  | Baltimore     | Branch of the M. E. Church      | 1830               | James R. Williams, Ibid                             |                  |
| Seventh-Day Baptists  | United States | General Conference              | 1833               | W. B. Gillett, Ibid                                 |                  |
| Presbyterian (New School)   | Philadelphia  | General Assembly                | 1840               | Joel Parker, D. D., Ibid                            |                  |
| True Wesleyan Methodist   | New York      | Delegates from Methodist denom. | 1843               | J. Timberman, Ibid                                  |                  |
| Free Communion Baptists   | New York      | Benjah Corp.                    | Close of 18th Cen. | Rev. A. Williams in "History of All Denominations"  |                  |

From Cardinal Gibbons' "Faith of Our Fathers."—J. Murphy C., Baltimore, p. 46.

claim to all the nations of the world until the very crack of doom.

She has withstood the acids of modern unbelief which have eaten so deeply into the traditional fabrics of other faiths. She has refused to surrender to the gilded paganism of the day, and has declined to lower her ethical standards to suit the demands of a pleasure loving world. She has refused to make compromise with Caesar by surrendering any of her sovereignty in the spiritual domain to the heightened nationalism and imperialism of the day. She preaches "Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today; and the same forever."<sup>1</sup> This perpetuity of the Church, this survival through all the ages, without the surrender of any of her truths, and without ever ceasing to carry her divine deposit of doctrine to all the nations of the world, is the blinding evidence that Christ has kept His promise to be with her all days. The Catholic Church today is as truly the Church of Christ as she was when she first came from the hands of her Divine Founder, nineteen centuries ago in Judea.

#### Explanation of Chart

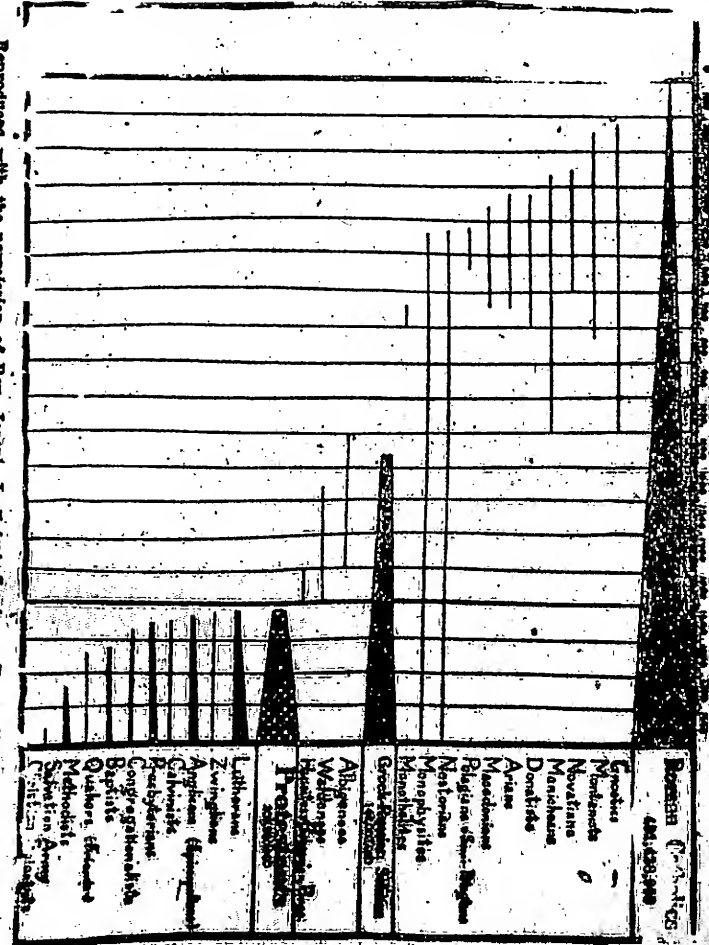
The chart on page 69 shows at a glance that the Catholic Church is the only Church in the world today which traces her origin back to Christ. It shows that she alone was founded by Christ while all other Churches were established by men. It brings into such clear relief that even he who runs may see that the Catholic Church with Christ for her Founder and Protector through all the centuries is the one true Church of Christ on earth.

The vertical lines indicate the centuries of the Christian era. The horizontal lines represent some of the larger and more important of the many hundreds of religious denominations that have risen during the past nineteen centuries. Those lines indicate the duration of the various sects by beginning at the respective dates of origin, and ceasing when they disappeared. The width of the line shows the approximate size of the denomination.

It is to be noted that Protestantism first appears upon the earth in the sixteenth century, in contrast to the Catholic Church which had been in existence at that time for fif-

Chart Showing the  
Divine Origin and  
Continuous Growth  
of the Catholic Church  
as Contrasted With  
the Human Origins  
and Short Durations  
of Other Faiths

Reproduced with the permission of Rev. Joseph J. Haertl, Rectory Press, Rochester, N. Y.  
Statistics are from The Catholic World Atlas, quoted in The Sign, February, 1924, p. 191.



<sup>1</sup> Heb. 13:8.



teen hundred years, having been founded by Jesus Christ in Jerusalem in the year 33 A. D.

Better than many a volume this chart shows in a vivid and graphic manner the divine origin of the Catholic Church and reveals the basis of her claim to the spiritual allegiance of all mankind.

While the term "Protestantism" had its origin at the Diet of Spires in Germany in 1529, the first manifestation of the movement occurred when Martin Luther nailed his theses to the doors of the church at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. All the other Protestant denominations were started by various human founders since that time. Contrast the divine origin of the Catholic Church with the human origins of all the Protestant churches.

#### *Ceaseless Division Within Protestantism*

In contrast with the unbroken continuity of the Catholic Church stretching down through nineteen hundred years, preserving her unity of faith inviolate under one supreme spiritual head, are the various sects which arose in the course of the centuries and which are conspicuous either for the lateness of their arrival upon the stage of Christendom, or for their impermanence and instability, and for the divisions and disintegrations which have gone steadily on within their own ranks. The heretical sects which sprang up in the early centuries, such as the Novatians, Macedonians, and Pelagians, have disappeared from the earth, leaving only their names and the memory of their errors to posterity. As the branch of the tree that is cut off from the trunk, and is thus deprived of the life-giving sap, speedily withers and dies, so these sects when separated from the Mother Church, were deprived of the life-giving graces flowing through her sacramental veins to all the members of her organic body, and speedily withered and died.

It was the realization of this truth that brought that gifted scholar, John Henry Newman of Oxford University, England, into the fold of Christ. While engaged in his great historical investigation of the Monophysites and other heretical sects in the early ages, the startling question suddenly burst upon him: "Am I not after all in the same relative position to the Church of Christ as the Monophysites of the

fifth century?" As he surveyed the innumerable divisions within Protestantism, the query persisted: "What is the difference in the position of all the Protestant sects who cut themselves off from the historic centre of unity in the sixteenth century and the heretical sects which did the same in the fifth?" The question gripped him, and would not let him rest.

In his classic *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* he describes his new realization of the analogous position of Protestants of the sixteenth century and of his own day to the heretical sects of the fifth century. "There was an awful similitude," he writes, "more awful, because so silent and unimpassioned, between the dead records of the past and the feverish chronicle of the present. . . . My stronghold was antiquity; now here, in the middle of the fifth century, I found as it seemed to me, Christendom of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries reflected. I saw my face," he adds with horror, "in the mirror and I was a Monophysite."

#### *Cardinal Newman's Surrender to Truth*

The penetrating realization of the implications of that historical analogy that now loomed up vividly before him, stubborn and ineradicable, proved to be the turning point in his life. It was not without a terrific struggle that he surrendered. With all the might of his powerful intellect he struggled valiantly to establish some logical justification for Anglicanism as a sect or "branch" distinct from Rome. But all his continued research into the records of history served but to convince him beyond all possibility of doubt, that the Catholic Church alone was founded by Christ, and that she alone retained in their fullness the teachings of the Apostles. The conclusion which follows with irresistible logic, that the Catholic Church is the one true Church of Christ on earth, brought this gifted scholar, as it has brought many other brilliant minds both before and since his day, into the fold of Christ.

For in the twentieth century as in the fifth, when a branch is torn from the trunk of a tree, it withers and dies. The constant divisions and ceaseless disintegration which have been going on within Protestantism since it separated from the Mother Church is after all but a form of institu-

tional withering and creedal death. There is not a single one of the founders of a Protestant creed, who if he returned to earth today would recognize either his creed or his progeny.

Note, as shown in the chart, that the first form of Protestantism did not see the light of day until the sixteenth century—fifteen hundred years after Christ had founded the Catholic Church. In 1524, Martin Luther established the Lutheran Church. Ten years later, Henry VIII set up the Anglican Church in England. Rhode Island was the scene of the founding of the Baptist Church in America by Roger Williams in 1639. John Wesley established the Methodist Episcopal Church in England in 1739. Admittedly all these denominations are of human origin. All of them rejected one or more of the fundamental doctrines of historic Christianity, and introduced new tenets of their own devising.

*Whom Shall We Believe, Christ or Luther?*

Whom is the earnest searcher after truth to believe—Jesus Christ, the Son of God on the one hand, or Martin Luther, Henry VIII, Roger Williams, or John Wesley on the other? The whole question, Which is the true Church? comes down in the last analysis to the question, Am I to believe Jesus Christ in preference to Martin Luther, Henry VIII, Roger Williams, or John Wesley? Is not the authority of Jesus Christ greater than any of these men, and of the other human individuals who set up creeds of their own in contradiction to the plain teachings of Jesus Christ? If the authority of Jesus Christ is greater, then there is no escape from the conclusion that the Church which He Himself founded is to be accepted by all men as the one and only true Church of Christ on earth.

The speed with which these dissenting denominations split and disintegrated among themselves is evident from the fact that in America today there are more than two hundred denominations all disagreeing with one another. Indeed the larger denominations have undergone a ceaseless division within their own groups. Thus, within the Lutheran denomination there are no less than twenty-two different divisions, within the Methodists there are seventeen, within the Presbyterians there are fifteen. Within the Baptist Church there

are the following thirteen different divisions—grim evidence of the internal dissension that has been ceaselessly at work within the bosom of Protestantism: the Regular North Baptists, the Regular South Baptists, the Regular Colored Baptists, the Seventh-day Baptists, the Six Principles Baptists, the Free Will Baptists, the Original Free Will Baptists, the General Baptists, the United Baptists, the Separate Baptists, the Baptist Church of Christ, the Primitive Baptists, and lastly the Old Two Seed in the Spirit Predestinarian Baptists. Is this the "one fold" and the "one faith" in which Jesus wished all His followers to be united, and for which He prayed so fervently shortly before His death upon Calvary's Cross?

On the contrary it is the confirmation which the twentieth century offers of the persistence of that spirit of internal strife and dissension which characterized the activities of the Reformers in the sixteenth century. That this spirit alarmed even the Reformers themselves is evident from the following passage in a letter Calvin wrote to Melancthon: "It is of great importance that the divisions which subsist among us should not be known to future ages; for nothing can be more ridiculous than that we who have been compelled to make a separation from the whole world, should have agreed so ill among ourselves from the beginning of the Reformation."<sup>1</sup> It was the persistence of this spirit of internal discord and dissension which has split Protestantism into so many hundred warring sects that recently caused the Rev. Peter Ainslee, a Congregational minister at Baltimore, to characterize this multiplicity of sects as "the scandal of Christendom."

*The Victory of the Church Foretold by St. John*

The beloved disciple of Christ, St. John, placed his discerning finger upon the salient reason why the Catholic Church has withstood the fall of empires, and the invasion of the barbarians which caused even the mighty empire of Rome to collapse, why she has withstood the religious upheaval of the sixteenth century which shook Christendom to its very foundation, and why she is able to withstand today the acids of modern unbelief and the enervating influence of

<sup>1</sup>Epist. 141.



a gilded paganism, when back in the first century he exclaimed with prophetic foresight: "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith."<sup>1</sup>

Because the Catholic Church was founded directly and immediately by Jesus Christ, because He has remained with her through the ages, protecting her from error, the Church remains today as she has been throughout the past nineteen hundred years, the one true Church of Christ on earth.

<sup>1</sup>I John, 5:4.

### Discussion Aids

What is the acid test of the true Church? Can anyone find it? Why do not all find it? Give a text from each Gospel showing that Christ's foundation was a Church teaching with authority. How do you know that that Church was the present Roman Catholic Church? What three fundamental facts of history become evident from study of development of Church? Cite examples from history showing that Christ has kept His promise that His Church should endure. What discovery on his part brought Newman into the Church? Analyze the fact that more than 200 dissenting denominations (called Christian) have resulted from Luther's schism. What conclusion may be logically drawn as to direct and immediate founding of the Church by Christ?

#### *Practices:*

Say often the prayer, "I do believe, Lord: help my unbelief." (Mark 9: 23).

Read the first 12 chapters of the Acts observing the Early Church at work. The prayers at the foot of the altar after Mass are said for the intention of the Holy Father for the welfare of the Church. Be more zealous in joining in them.

Invite non-Catholic fellow students to go to Church with you.

## Chapter VII

### THE CATHOLIC RELIGION: HUMAN OR DIVINE?

#### *An Appeal to the Facts of History*

Is the Catholic Church a human institution, founded by men and having only human authority behind her? Or is she an institution founded directly and immediately by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and speaking to the world in the name and with the authority of Christ Himself? This is the fundamental question facing intelligent people in the world today and demanding an answer. Upon the answer to this question hinge consequences of a far-reaching character.

If the Church be of merely human origin, there is nothing particularly sacred about her teachings, nothing unmodifiable in her creed. If she be of divine origin, her teachings have a sanctity which no human being could confer, her creed is not modifiable by human beings. Truths revealed by God are valid not merely for a day but for time and eternity.

While consisting of human beings, and having many laws and regulations that are purely human in their origin, the Church as an institution commissioned to teach the truths revealed by Christ to humanity is divine in her origin. Established by Jesus Christ, she speaks to the world concerning His teachings with the authority of her divine Founder.

What is the evidence of her divine origin? In the preceding chapters we have presented various lines of evidence, such as, the four marks of the Church, and her divine origin and commission to teach all nations in the name of Christ. We now appeal to the indisputable fact of her marvelous propagation throughout the world—of which history knows no parallel. In the story of her origin and growth there is visible to every unjaundiced eye the finger of God. The more light that is cast upon the conditions surrounding her birth,

and the obstacles to her growth by the calm white searchlight of historic research, the more vivid and spectacular becomes the dramatic story of her rise and conquest of the world. The more clearly we discern the true character and magnitude of the obstacles, the more strongly are we convinced that they were insurmountable by human ingenuity alone. Only by constant supernatural assistance and unfailing succour from on High could a band of men, most of whom were untutored fishermen, go forth and literally change the face of the earth by effecting the mightiest moral revolution that this world has ever seen.

### *A Moving Story*

It is a story that has in it all the rich color of romance and the thrill of adventure and achievement. There is the sombre pathos of indescribable human suffering. There is the quickening touch of unparalleled bravery and indomitable courage. There is the tingling thrill of superhuman courage that rose to the loftiest heights of heroic moral grandeur. In the long annals of recorded human history, the story of the daring and the heroism of the early Christians stands out as the one story that has never ceased to move the hearts and thrill the souls of unending generations of men. It not only moves and thrills them, but it compels them at the end to exclaim as with a single voice: "This is not the work of man, but of God!" For, amidst all the minutiae of human phenomena, there is discerned the finger of God as clearly and as luminously as the sun shining in the noonday sky.

Let us go back to the very beginning of the sublime story. The opening scene is set in the land of Judea, in the thirty-third year of Our Lord. In a world that was plunged in the darkness of polytheism and pagan idolatry, the inhabitants of Judea had for centuries held aloft the torch of monotheism—the worship of the one true God. Through the centuries they had been awaiting the coming of the long-heralded Messiah, who was to restore them to their former glory and to a lofty pinnacle of national greatness and world empire.

These "people claimed an old history, dating back 2,000 years; they spoke a rude and unpolished language of the

olden times; they had a religion repulsive for its austerity, and whose ceremonies were despised. It was the land of Judea—a fossil land—a mock and a jibe among the nations. In Judea men spoke with contempt of its rudest part, Galilee. On the sandy beach of the sea of Galilee, beneath towering mountains, stood One, who gathered about Him twelve poor fishermen of this little secluded lake, and unto them He said: 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.'"<sup>1</sup>

In these words, Christ commissioned twelve Galileans, most of them fishermen, to go and teach whom? Not a few individuals, or groups of individuals, or even a few nations, but all nations. Teach them what? A few maxims or a few rules? No. They were to teach them "all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The more carefully one studies the character of this command, the more clearly does he realize that this is the most gigantic, the most colossal, the most stupendous task ever placed upon the frail shoulders of man. Twelve illiterate Galileans were commanded to go out and change the face of the world. Without the backing of powerful armies or the might of human learning, or the force of persuasive eloquence, they were charged to effect the mightiest, the most radical, and the most far-reaching revolution in thought and conduct which the human race has ever known. Well might they have quailed under such a charge! Well, indeed, might they have faltered and demurred!

To understand more clearly the character of that tremendous change which they were charged to effect, let us now turn our eyes upon that world into which they were sent. With the single exception of the Jewish people, polytheism held supreme sway among the nations. Imperial Rome had reached the zenith of her military power and martial glory. In the course of eight centuries, she had grown from a little stone fort on the Palatine into a world empire. She had made herself the Mistress of the Seas, the Con-

<sup>1</sup>Matt. XXVIII. 19, 20.



queror of the world, the Eternal City. Paths led to her from all the corners of the inhabitable globe.

Her empires stretched from the Atlantic on the west to the Euphrates on the east. From the banks of the Danube and the Rhine to the Cataracts of the Nile, her will was the supreme law. Gaul, Spain, and Britain, as well as the vast Oriental empires of Egypt, Assyria, and Parthia, besides a hundred minor kingdoms, fell before the irresistible might of Roman arms. The Eagles of Rome became the one symbol of universal dominion. "All the golden streams of the world's commerce flowed now to one political center, bearing Rome-ward with equal thoroughness all the confluent of art, literature, and luxury. The glorious dreams of Alexander the Great were translated into realities when Roman "Conquistadori" sat at Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage, Saragossa, Lyons, and York. Rome had now become the greatest empire that the world had ever known.

#### *The Austerity of Christian Teaching*

Scarcely had the crash of empires falling beneath the victorious arms of Rome died away; scarcely had Rome's task of enslaving the universal world become complete, when there is set up in her own bosom a process that begins to spell her doom. Victorious over all foes from without, the fatal chains of her enslavement are being forged at her own domestic hearth. The cancer of vice and immorality is slowly but surely gnawing into her very heart, sapping her vitality, weakening her moral fiber, and sending its noxious poisons through her whole body politic. The home, the foundation stone of all national greatness, has been undermined by the dread evil of divorce. The waters of the stream of social life have been corrupted at their very source by the domestic evils of abortion, infanticide, and conjugal infidelity.

Over that teeming city of three million people, vice, immorality, debauchery, licentiousness, swept like a devastating plague, leaving ruin and destruction in its wake. The most shameful Bacchanalian orgies were performed even in the name of the pagan gods. From Rome the cancer of immorality spread quickly throughout the empire. The nation, which for eight centuries had stood as impervious as a wall of adamant against the onslaughts of every foe, fell at last be-

neath the weight of her own corruption. For, as water can rise no higher than its source, so the power of a nation can rise no higher than its source—its national conscience or the plane of its moral life.

Into a world, then, plunged into the darkness of pagan idolatry, half-buried in the swamp of moral foulness, shameful licentiousness, and bestial immorality, the Master sent these twelve Galileans to teach a doctrine of angelic purity, virginal chastity, and self-control. For domestic infidelity and promiscuity, there is to be substituted the indissoluble bond of matrimony; for the uncurbed indulgence and license of the passions, there are to be substituted restraint and self-control. This was a flying in the very teeth of the deep-rooted raging passion of lust. Unlike Mahomet, who preached greater sensual indulgence, these Galilean fishermen preached less—demanding that the pagans give up their deep-rooted and inveterate passions. To a world steeped in the mire of gross sensuality and carnal indulgence, nothing could be stranger doctrine than this. Humanly speaking, therefore, the austerity of the teachings of the Apostles, of their demands for mortification, self-sacrifice and self-denial, reacted unfavorably against their ready acceptance by the sensual, carnal-minded pagans of the Graeco-Roman empire.

On top of this stumbling block, there was the additional one, arising from the fact that the pagan worship of idols had been made the national cultus or the state religion. It had become woven into the warp and woof of Roman law. The practice of the Christian religion therefore was a civil offense. In the minds of the Romans every misfortune became attributable to the Christians. For it was their failure to propitiate the pagan gods that prompted the deities thus to show their anger. If the Tiber overflowed its banks, the cry immediately arose: "*Christiani ad leones!*" "The Christians to the lions!" Forthwith hundreds would be carried to the Roman amphitheater to become the prey of hungry lions. Almost inconceivable was the brutal torture inflicted upon the Christians. Sometimes their tongues were cut off, their eyes burnt from their faces, while many of them were coated with pitch and tar and burned alive as torches to illumine the gladiatorial contests in the Roman amphitheatre.

Even gentle women and little children were not exempt from such frightful tortures.

Some of you may perhaps recall the story of Agatha, a little girl of Sicily. Born of rich and noble parents, she was justly famed for her virtue and her beauty. Quintianus was governor of Sicily at the time the Roman emperor Decius launched his violent persecution against the Christians. Learning through spies and informers that Agatha was a believer in "Christ and Him Crucified," Quintianus summoned her from Palermo to Catania, where he was then sojourning. Agatha knew full well the meaning of the summons and the terrible fate which lurked beneath it, if she remained true to the religion of Christ.

Undaunted, the youthful Agatha set out on her journey, exclaiming, "Oh, Jesus Christ. All that I am is Thine; preserve me and steel me to resist the threats of this tyrant!"

When Quintianus beheld her, he was struck by her beauty and innocence. So instead of ordering her to offer incense to the idols, the lustful governor commanded her to renounce her faith in Christ by committing a sensual immoral action. She refused, saying, "Christ is my life and my salvation." When imprisonment failed to break her will of iron, Quintianus again summoned her before him. "If thou wilt do what I command," said he, "and thus renounce this God of the Christians, I will give thee not only thy life and liberty, but everything that the heart of a little girl craves." But all to no purpose. That frail young girl, beautiful and fair as the angels that minister before the all-white throne of the Eternal King, stood before Quintianus and his court and challenged the power of mighty Rome and the allurements of pagan vice to shake her faith in the Crucified and her unflinching adherence to His laws.

At last, in a rage of passion, Quintianus ordered her breasts to be cut from her body. Finding her still unyielding, he commanded her to be rolled naked upon pointed potsherds and sharp rocks, which pierced deep into her tender flesh. As the warm life blood slowly ebbed from a hundred deep wounds in her body, crimsoning the rocky ground, this brave little Christian girl, with one last desperate effort, turned her face, still illumined by the trace of a gentle smile toward the heavens and with her arms upraised, cried out, "Jesus,

now I am all Thine!" With these words upon her dying lips, her head fell back on the ground while her soul too precious for the sordid world of pagan vice, winged its flight back into the outstretched arms and the tender bosom of her God and Savior, Jesus Christ. With the beautiful white robe of her baptismal innocence still unsullied, she returned to her heavenly home to receive from the hands of her Master, Jesus Christ, the glorious crown of martyrdom. To this day, during volcanic eruptions of Mt. Aetna, the people of Catania have sought protection in the veneration of her veil.

This incident of the brave little girl, whom we honor on our altars as St. Agatha, is mentioned only because it is typical of hundreds and thousands who defied the power of mighty Rome and braved death in a hundred forms rather than give up their faith in Christ and Him Crucified. Emperor after emperor, from the imperial throne of the mighty Caesars, hurled forth their anathemas against this new religion. "It must be wiped," they declared, "from the very face of the earth." All the tortures which the marvelous ingenuity of imperial Rome could devise, all the tortures which pagan cruelty and barbarian brutality could prompt were marshalled against the Christians. They were seized in their homes at night and during the day while they were at work. Even down into the dark recesses of the catacombs, under the hills of the Eternal City, the powerful hand of the persecutor reached, to bring them from the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, to be torn apart by wild beasts in the Roman amphitheater or to be burned alive before jeering, howling mobs. In the frantic effort of the pagan emperors to stamp out this religion, so many hundreds and thousands of Christians were sacrificed, that it is said that the streets of Rome ran with blood, and the waters of the Tiber along the shores of the city were dyed a crimson hue. Ten separate persecutions exhausted their force and savage brutality in the desperate effort to destroy forever the menace of the Christian Faith.

### Discussion Aids

Review briefly the divine foundation of the Church as evidenced by the four marks and the divine Commission (Matt. 28: 19-20).

Discuss the monotheistic belief of the Jews as the focal point in the preparation of the Twelve for conquering the world.

What did Christ add to complete the preparation of the Apostles? Contrast the results that were being felt among pagan nations from polytheistic belief. How did the austerity of the Christian teaching constitute a stumbling block to the spread of this teaching? Discuss pagan state requirement of the worship of idols as an additional impediment. Relate the story of St. Agatha. Discuss such a martyrdom, repeated in thousands of other cases, as an instrument in the hands of God for overcoming the world.

#### *Practices:*

Fight the false gods of love of riches and of power in your own life.

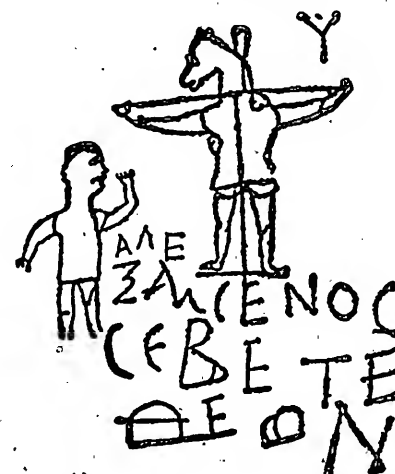
Be willing to make sacrifices for your Faith.

Keep yourself in union with God especially by night and morning prayer.

## II

### *Calumnies Against the Christian Religion*

Not only did imperial Rome use the grosser weapons of brute force and savage violence, but with her characteristic cunning, she employed the more subtle weapons of slander and calumny. The most absurd reports were circulated broadcast against the Christians. They were charged with coming together at secret places in the night, and butchering an infant and then eating its bloody members. This was the manner in which the pagans perverted the Christian doctrine of Holy Communion. The Christians were represented as stupid, credulous fanatics, whose chief object of worship was an ass's head nailed to a cross. Archaeologists exploring among the ruins of ancient Rome discovered a graffito or scratching upon the walls of the Palatine Hill which reveals in a vivid and graphic manner the ridicule and calumny heaped upon the Christians. The cartoon, which is now in the Kircherian Museum in Rome, depicts a man with the head of an ass fastened to a cross, while nearby stands a Christian in prayer. Down below the drawing are inscribed in Greek the words: "Alexamenos worships his God."



GRAFFITO OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

(From Marucchi's *Elements d'Archéologie*, Desclée De Brouwer et Cie.)

We are surprised when, during those waves of religious bigotry which periodically sweep over this country especially at election times, we find the sacred and beautiful doctrines of our Church violently distorted and misrepresented. Our schools, convents, hospitals, homes of the friendless, and houses of the Good Shepherd for the care and regeneration of the unfortunate ones in human society—even these beneficent institutions, with which the Church has blessed society and furthered the cause of civilization, are attacked and misrepresented as houses of corruption and dens of iniquity. Even the gentle Sisters, ministering angels to suffering humanity, are not spared from the vile, black hand of the defamer.

But it is nothing new. Back in the fourth century we find the pagan emperor, Maximinus Daza, in his attempt to discredit the new religion in the eyes of the Roman Empire, placarding the walls and buildings of Rome with vicious cartoons and calumnies, and having these libels circulated throughout the masses and taught to the children in the schools. They had their Maximinus Daza in the fourth century as we had our notorious and unspeakably vile *Menace* in the twentieth.



Combined with attacks of calumny and libel were the onslaughts of pagan philosophers. The attempt was made to undermine the foundation of the Christian faith by showing that the belief in the Resurrection rested upon the hallucination of Magdalene. The Apostles were represented as ignorant fishermen, victims of a great deception. Celsus, who has been aptly styled "the Ingersoll of the second century," attempted to explain away the miracles as the result of magic. But that which has been termed "the most ample and thoroughgoing treatise which has ever been written against Christianity" came from the pen of the pagan philosopher Porphyry. His attempt to overthrow Christianity by showing the mystical character of its doctrines fills fifteen large volumes. St. Paul especially is attacked as an unstable, rude, insincere rhetorician. In short, all the dialectical acumen and force of pagan philosophy were leveled at the rational bases of the Christian faith in a last desperate effort to undermine it.

#### *Insufficiency of the Means Used*

When to the gigantic and apparently insurmountable obstacles of Roman persecution and indescribable cruelty is added the appalling weakness of the very agency chosen to overcome them, our wonder that the Christian religion ever survived at all becomes unbounded. What were the means used to overcome the gross sensuality and licentious profligacy in which the whole of the pagan world was steeped? What was the wisdom selected to vanquish the proud philosophy of haughty Greece and Rome? What was the power chosen to lower at last the standard of the Eagles which betokened the universal sway of the Imperial City—the power that was to conquer her who had conquered the world and win for her the proud title of "the Eternal City, the Mistress of the World?" Was it a group of great scholars whose learning would cause all to bow their minds in ready acceptance of their teachings? Was it a band of brilliant, silver-tongued orators whose persuasive eloquence would move and sway and thrill the minds and hearts of men as so much plastic putty in the potter's hand? Was it a great and mighty host of warriors who were to compel for the first time the hitherto invincible legions of warlike Rome to bow their heads in the bitterness of defeat?

No! It is a band of ignorant illiterate Jewish fishermen, without learning, without human eloquence, without a single soldier, without human power—they are sent out to conquer the world! Could anything appear more impossible, more ridiculous, more bordering on insanity? With the prestige of human learning and the moving force of impassioned eloquence, and the might of great battalions of soldiery, the task would still have been a gigantic one. But with none of these, who, humanly speaking, would not say that it was hopelessly foredoomed to inevitable failure?

This conviction is further deepened when we realize that the Apostles and disciples were not only ignorant, untutored fishermen, but were drawn from the Jewish race—the most despised race on the face of the earth. To the proud Roman and the cultured Greek, the Jew was an object of obloquy and loathing. Everywhere he was reviled. He was the social outcast, the pariah among the nations of the earth.

Among the Jews there was one section that was looked down upon with particular contempt, even by the Jews themselves. This was the tribe of people living in Galilee, the rudest part. Yet, strange as it may appear to human eyes, Christ chose His Apostles for the most part from the most despised section of this despised race—the scorned Galileans, a mock and a jibe even among the Jews and far worse among the other nations of the earth. Could any choice appear blinder, more out of sorts with every instinct of human expediency? Could Christ have chosen, if He had tried, any agency that could have been weaker, feeble, or more conspicuously unsuited according to every standard of human calculation, to accomplish the most difficult of all undertakings ever committed to mortal hands? Judged by every earthly standard, it would seem as if He could not. Measured by every worldly criterion, Christ seemed to have exhausted every possibility of choosing the weakest, the most ineffective, the most appallingly feeble instrument to encompass the achievement which provokes to this day the ceaseless wonder and the undying admiration of the world.

Yet when the Pentecostal fire had descended upon them, this band of ignorant, illiterate Jewish fishermen went out into the dark night of heathen idolatry and the maelstrom

of pagan debauchery and literally changed the face of the earth. The mighty empire of the Romans is parceled out among them for their conquests. Beginning at the very heart of the Jewish world, the Prince of the Apostles preaches in Jerusalem and by his first sermon converts three thousand souls, some of whom had doubtless but a short time ago assisted in the crucifixion of Christ. Then St. Peter journeys to Antioch and finally to Rome, where he establishes his see and gains the glorious crown of martyrdom.

Through Europe into Asia penetrates the great Apostle of the Gentiles, burning with zeal for souls. Into Syria and Greece goes Andrew. Into Ephesus and Asia Minor goes John. Even to the far-away Indies, according to tradition, journeys Thomas, planting the mustard seed of the Kingdom and holding aloft the glowing torch of the Gospel of Christ that was destined to burn forever. The voice of these Apostolic fishermen was heard on the plains of Arabia and in Scythia, reaching to the Indus, the Ganges, and into Spain, penetrating to the very pillars of Hercules. Everywhere was heard the preaching of Christ and Him Crucified. Well indeed was St. Paul able to exclaim in the words of the Prophet: "Their sound hath gone forth to all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world."<sup>1</sup>

They went forth on their mission speaking in foreign tongues and in accents strangely new. Without flinching they met the crafty fanaticism of the Rabbi, the polish and subtlety of the cultured Greek philosopher, the blind fury and cruel persecutions of imperial Rome, and they overcame them all. For the words of their Master were still ringing in their ears: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."<sup>2</sup> "But have confidence, I have overcome the world."<sup>3</sup>

### *The Triumph*

The success which attended the labors of the Apostles is the most phenomenal in all history. During their own lifetime they witnessed the birth of the Christian Church in practically every land in the civilized world. Despite the furious storms of persecution seeking to extinguish it, the

<sup>1</sup>Rom. X. 18.

<sup>2</sup>John XV. 20.

<sup>3</sup>John XVI. 33.

Gospel of Christ spread like wildfire among the nations, until it became a great glowing flame in the heavens, banishing the darkness of pagan night and ushering in the dawn of a new day. There in the heavens it shone as a mighty beacon light to guide the tottering footsteps of a redeemed humanity in the new and enlarged horizon of human life. With such striking kaleidoscopic rapidity was the evangelization of the pagan world effected that Tertullian, a convert to the new religion, living in the second century, was able to address these words to the Roman emperor: "We are but of yesterday, and we fill all that is yours: your cities, your islands, your military posts; your boroughs, your council chambers and your camps; the palace, the senate, the forum; your temples alone we leave you."

The story of the conquest of the pagan world by a band of illiterate Galilean fishermen reads like a page from a mighty drama. "First, the Jewish synagogue," says Otten, "still stained with the blood of the God-man, measured its strength with the weakness of the Galilean fishermen, but succumbed in the conflict. Then the world-embracing power of Rome threw down the gauntlet, wholly determined to crush the infant Church. Three hundred years that contest lasted; many thousands of followers of the Crucified Nazarene sealed their Faith with a martyr's death. But when the one-sided conflict ceased, the blood-stained sword had fallen from the mailed hand of pagan Rome and the successor of St. Peter sat upon the throne of the Caesars. The sign of the redemption once raised upon Calvary's heights rose over the seven hills of Rome, proclaiming to the world that an empire had been founded which would proclaim its sway over all nations, not by the power of the sword, but by the omnipotence of God's own word. The temples of idols yielded their place to the One True God. The gospel of peace brought sunshine into the lives of men that had but known the darkness of death; churches and schools and charitable institutions arose everywhere as so many manifestations of the spirit of God, which had gone forth to renew the face of the earth." "The purest among the strong, and the strongest among the pure," says Richter, "Christ lifted with His wounded hands, empires from their hinges and changed the stream of ages."

This changing of the stream of ages, this subjugation of the pagan world, this conquest of the unconquerable Rome stands out as the mightiest moral and social revolution which the world has ever known. But every effect demands an adequate cause. To say that such a stupendous achievement could have been accomplished through the unaided efforts of a band of Galilean fishermen is to deny the evidence offered by all the laws of history and human experience. As we have already seen, the human agency chosen was the weakest and the most unsuited that could possibly have been selected. Illiterate fishermen of the most despised strata of the universally despised Jewish race, without learning, without eloquence, without military power, overcoming the proud philosophers of Greece, victorious over the might of Roman arms! Christ chose these men because of their very lack of all human capacities necessary to gain the victory. For if Christ had chosen profound philosophers or silver-tongued orators of moving eloquence, or mighty generals, with innumerable soldiers to propagate His religion, men would have justly exclaimed: "Lo! there is no miracle here. This religion has spread by human power." To prevent just such a possibility, Christ chose the agency which, humanly speaking, was the most unsuited that men would be compelled to exclaim: "Lo! this is not the work of men, but of God!"

In the great yawning gulf that stretches between the means used and the effect accomplished, the power of God shines forth most luminously. According to every human calculation the religion of the crucified Christ should have gone down in the most ignominious of failures. Its conquest of the world, in spite of the lack of practically every means needed to attain that end, stamps upon its brow the unmistakable imprint of the Divine. The same keynote is struck by St. Paul when he exclaims: "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He might confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He might confound the strong. And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His sight."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>1 Cor. i. 27-29.

Alexander the Great conquered nations by wading through a sea of blood. In later times Napoleon Bonaparte changed the map of Europe at the price of the uncounted soldiery of France. But the Apostles conquered the world without taking a drop of innocent blood, but rather by the willing shedding of their own blood. It has no parallel, therefore, in all the achievements of the world. For it was a victory wrought not by human hands, but by the power of God. In many respects, the propagation of the Catholic religion, which is historical Christianity, was a miracle more marvelous and wonderful than the raising of the dead to life. For the latter affected but a single person, while the former operated in millions of souls. From whatever angle the great drama be viewed, the student of history, with an eye to the facts and with a vision unjaundiced by prejudice, is compelled to cry out: "This religion must be born not of man, but of God. For it has triumphed, where, according to all the laws of history, it should have failed. It bears upon its brow the indelible imprint of the Divine, and in the moving drama of its birth and propagation there is evidenced to all men, as clear as the sun in the noonday heavens, the guiding finger of the Most High!"

### Discussion Aids

Analyze methods of pagan propaganda against Christianity. Give examples. Have the methods changed? Discuss Christian means used against pagan propaganda. Tell something of the missionary journeys of some of the Apostles. How is their success to be explained? Name some of the social and moral revolutions in the world's history. Does any of them compare with the revolution accomplished by these early Christian missionaries?

### Practices:

Bring to the meeting a piece of anti-Catholic propaganda and compare the method with that of earlier propagandists of the same kind. Analyze it objectively.

Pray for your enemies and for the enemies of the Church.

Don't lose your temper when your convictions are attacked. Defend them with dignity.



## Chapter VIII

### INTELLECTUALS TURN TO ROME: WHY?

#### *The Dramatic Stories of Arnold Lunn and G. K. Chesterton*

When John Henry Newman ended his long quest for religious truth and certainty by knocking at the portals of Rome on October 9, 1845, Benjamin Disraeli, later the Prime Minister, declared prophetically: "The Church of England has received a blow from which she shall reel and stagger for half a century." Was the predicted period of convalescence to prove too short? Recent events in England look that way.

G. K. Chesterton caused the British nation to gasp in astonishment when he entered the citadel of the ancient Faith. C. C. Martindale had revived the tradition of intellectual brilliance established by Newman when a student at Oxford, by taking the first prize in practically every course he followed at Oxford—a record which, I believe, has never been equalled. When he, too, turned to Rome to find historic Christianity, the intellectuals of England were dismayed. When Ronald Knox, the son of an Anglican Bishop, and one of the ablest satirists in England, renounced the parental heritage to find in the alien communion of Rome peace and serenity, the dismay of the intellectuals turned to alarm. "Are all the intellectuals drifting Romeward?" was a question heard on many sides.

One of the most eloquent voices in the pulpits of England and one of the most beloved ministers as well, is the Rev. Dr. William E. Orchard, until recently pastor of King's Weigh Chapel and now a Catholic priest. For years Dr. Orchard had been groping in the mists for more light and for greater assurance of being in union with the historic Church of Christ. In his recent *From Faith to Faith* he tells of the spiritual pilgrimage which ended at Rome. Rev. Dr. Vernon Johnson, an Anglican scholar of note, has recently trod a similar path, ending again at the portals of Peter the Fisherman.

#### *Lunn Surrenders Sword*

The trend Romeward, however, has been brought in a vivid and dramatic manner before the attention not only of England, but of the English speaking world, by the action of Arnold Lunn. One of the ablest and most brilliant of the antagonists of the ancient faith, Lunn has surrendered his sword and joined the procession that began with Newman and continues to this day its ceaseless trek toward Rome.

What is the magnetism of Rome? What is the strange attraction which draws with such apparent irresistibility many of the best minds of England to take a step which goes counter to the training of a lifetime and brings amazement and distress to their family and friends? Perhaps the cases of Arnold Lunn and of G. K. Chesterton will throw some light on this mystery. Perhaps they will reveal the line of reasoning, the historic considerations, the objective credentials which gave no quarter, but demanded absolute surrender.

Lunn's dozen volumes had already won for him an enviable reputation as a writer of distinction. In one of his volumes, however, he played the role of a critic of the Church. Few who read this work, *Roman Converts*, ever imagined that within a decade, the author would himself be traveling over the same highway as the men whose conversion seemed to him so difficult to explain on rational grounds. In a recent volume, *Now I See*, Lunn narrates the moving story of his spiritual Odyssey from agnosticism to Catholicism.

#### *Dean Inge's Prophecy*

Lunn was born in 1888 at Madras, India, where his father was serving as a Methodist missionary. His mother was the daughter of Canon Moore, an Episcopalian divine and headmaster of Middleton College. As a child, he was taken to the Anglican service in the morning and to the Methodist service in the evening. Despite the double ration of church going he did not form any strong attachment to either church. Realizing dimly that the double ration was due to the schism within his family, he came to regard unity as the most important mark of the true Church.

He studied at Harrow and at Balliol College, Oxford, where he gave evidence of intellectual brilliance in the fields

that interested him, but paid scant attention to the routine curriculum. He devoured the works of the leading Modernists, English, French and German. The pragmatism of William James appealed to him strongly. Enamored of modernism, he regarded orthodox Christianity as untenable and looked upon Catholics as "people who exalted faith and emotion at the expense of reason and history."

It was substantially this view that prompted him to investigate how apparently intelligent Englishmen like Newman, Manning, Knox, etc., could in spite of their Anglican training and associations enter the Church of Rome. His study of the facts of history, the writings of the early Fathers bearing witness to the Apostolic teachings, the Thomistic exposition of the philosophical basis of Catholicism—credentials which gripped the minds of his Roman Converts and gave them no rest until they surrendered—made perceptible gaps in his cocksure attitude that historic Christianity was outmoded. Later on he wrote *The Flight from Reason*, in which he contrasts the Thomistic insistence upon reason and objective evidence with the subjectivism and credulity prevalent today. When his father sent Dean Inge a copy, the latter prophesied, "Mark my words, your son will end a fanatic papist."

#### "The Cold Clear Light"

In 1930 Lunn began to exchange letters with Father Ronald Knox of Oxford on Catholicism. In this volume of controversy, entitled *Difficulties*, Lunn marshals the strongest objections to Catholicism he could think of, only to have them demolished by Father Knox. As the correspondence progressed, he began to feel unsettled. "I've written a very good letter to Father Knox," he remarked to his wife. "You'd better write a good letter to yourself," she replied dryly, "if you want to remain a Protestant."

Like Inge, she was a good prophet. With all his objections answered, Lunn found himself driven by the sheer force of reason to take the step, for which he had formerly derided his Roman Converts. He had been to Mass but a few times in his life. There was no particular appeal in the Church's liturgy. No emotional appeal. When he was received by Father Knox, he surrendered to the credentials

which had made willing hostages of Newman, Manning and the very priest, the son of an Anglican bishop, who was then opening for him the portals of Rome. "*The cold clear light of reason*," he writes, "*is all the guidance a man needs to find his way to the Church*. The invigorating warmth of Faith is a luxury which he has no right to demand."

"I had no more idea of becoming a Catholic," said G. K. Chesterton, "than of becoming a cannibal." So it was with Arnold Lunn. A capacity for logical reasoning and a weakness for objective evidence instead of intuition drove Lunn, like Chesterton before him, over a path that crossed the boulders of prejudice and misconceptions and stopped not even at the threshold of the Catholic Church, but continued straight to the altar rail. If ever a man has been catapulted into the Church by the sheer power of reason, that man is Arnold Lunn.

#### "Funny Internal Feeling"

The appeal of the Catholic apologist to objective evidence in contrast to the tendency of the modernist to shy away from external facts and appeal to personal intuition made a profound impression upon Lunn, who was searching for religious truth with his intellect and not with his feelings. In this he was as old-fashioned as St. Thomas Aquinas who had the curious habit of demonstrating his theses by an appeal to external evidence amenable to reason instead of striking the modern pose and pointing to the subjective evidence—the internal experience which the subject alleges he has, but which no other person in the world can verify. He perceived that the Catholic Church alone retains the mediaeval heritage of appealing to reason instead of emotion and alleged intuition to establish the validity of her belief. She battles single-handedly a vast array of heresies which agree only in fleeing from reason and in seeking refuge in the dark cave of subjectivism, in which they find security, because no one can discover either where or what they are.

The new moral codes which are offered as so many panaceas to a confused and distraught age are all based upon the authority of intuition. "All these modern prophets," observes Lunn, "appeal to a funny feeling inside, a feeling that they are right and that other people are mostly

wrong. Professor Julian Huxley, for instance, has a funny feeling inside when he listens to noble music or strays by chance into a Catholic cathedral. This funny internal feeling, hereinafter known as Fif, responds, so he *feels*, to some objective reality. He has therefore written a book to prove, or rather to assert, for no genuine Fifite ever condescends to proof, that you can banish God and revelation from religion and yet retain everything that is worth retaining, provided, of course, that you have got the right kind of Fif."

Lunn's analysis of H. G. Wells, the most vocal of the literary salesmen of new religions and new codes of ethics, is capital. He characterizes Wells as a classic example of the Fif malady. Losing all contact with objective truth, this philosopher novelist—or should we say novelist philosopher?—weaves a gossamer world of unreality out of his innards after the fashion of a spider spinning its web in the springtime. His book, *God the Invisible King*, is of interest chiefly to the student of the malady prevalent among the modern prophets, known as Fifism. Lunn finds the volume enormously interesting because it offers such a splendid exhibition of the current Fifite pathology in all its naked nakedness.

#### "I'm Drawing God"

Writing this curious book under the impression that the world was waiting for him to supply it with an up-to-date deity, Mr. Wells scorns the appeal to reason, frowns upon facts, and opens the faucet for his funny internal feelings to gush forth. Lunn illustrates the temper of mind which characterizes Mr. Wells' creation of a deity suitable for the new age with the following story: A mother once discovered her little daughter drawing pictures, strange pictures. "What are you drawing?" asked the mother. "I'm drawing God," answered the little girl. "You can't do that," counselled the mother, "nobody knows what God looks like." "They'll know now," replied the little girl, and went on drawing.

"They'll know now," says Lunn, is the motto of Mr. Wells. That the latter confirms the analysis of Lunn is evident from such passages as this. "Modern religion," writes Wells, "bases its knowledge of God and its account of God *entirely* upon experience. It has encountered God. It does not argue about God; it relates."

Where St. Thomas demonstrated, Mr. Wells relates. Tapping the fountain of his Fif, he pours out streams of dogmatic assertions about his up-to-date deity. From the first page to the last there is nothing remotely resembling an argument, nothing that has a nodding acquaintance with sustained logical reasoning. Are you curious to know what kind of a deity emerged from this novel method of gestation? Here it is: "But the God of this new age, we repeat, looks not to our past but our future, and if a figure may represent him it must be the figure of a beautiful youth, already brave and wise, but hardly come to his strength."

If one is impertinent enough to ask Mr. Wells how he can possibly know that God is as youthful and as immature as the above portrait discloses, the author replies with unruffled dignity: "Thus saith Fif." "It is not surprising," comments Lunn, "that the God whom Fif invites us to worship is very like Mr. Wells." Man has a habit of making a deity in his own image and likeness. Lunn's keenness in detecting the cancer of subjectivism vitiating the whole body of Wellsian and Huxleyan literature prevented him from dallying in that camp.

#### Church Like Christ—Infallible

His search for the truth began and ended with Christ. Once he had found the right answer to the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" the rest was easy. "Once I had convinced myself that Jesus is different from all other men because He is God, I had not far to look for the Church which differs from all other Churches because it is divine. The Church of Christ must be unique like the Incarnation."

A few weeks after his reception into the Church, Lunn was invited to explain his conversion before a learned society which specializes in such religious discussions. His reasoning was in the form of the following syllogism: Christ was infallible. The true Church will teach the infallibility of Christ. No Church but the Catholic Church actually teaches the infallibility of Christ, and is ready to take disciplinary action against a member who denies any of the doctrines of Christ.

In the ensuing discussion, an extreme Modernist, a dignitary of the Church of England, objected to Lunn's logic.



Christ, he contended, was infallible as God, but fallible as man. He was true God and true man, and a true man must be a representative specimen of the genus man. Now it is in the nature of man to err, and Christ as man was therefore liable to err. Lunn invited his Modernist friend to suggest a criterion for discriminating between the truths which Christ revealed as God, and the errors which He propagated as man. From his reply Lunn gathered that Christ spoke as God when He agreed with Bishop Barnes, and as a man when He agreed with the Pope.

Lunn asked his Modernist critic how he managed to work up any enthusiasm for a remote Galilean, the record of whose life and teachings was vitiated by so many miracles which he rejected. To which he replied: "Because Christianity gives me a uniquely satisfying experience." Much of the same defense, Lunn pointed out, is often advanced for adultery by earnest disciples of the New Morality. "How can you," continued Lunn, "begin to convert them from the error of their ways, except by appealing to an external objective moral code, whose existence must be proved, not by an appeal to a uniquely satisfying experience, but by the appeal to reason?" How difficult it is to reason with those whose only appeal is to *Fif*, their funny internal feeling—the cancer of subjectivism that vitiates all reasoning and precludes all argument.

#### *What is Rome's Attraction?*

Lunn reports an amusing but enlightening incident of a Modernist friend who believed, so he said, in the deity of Christ while rejecting some of His teachings. "I'm going to preach on the attraction of Rome," he telephoned to Lunn.

"What precisely do you hold to be this Roman attraction?" inquired Lunn.

"Oh, authority and uniformity and great traditions."

"Yes, yes," said Lunn, "but surely you're going to say something about the main attraction of Rome, the fact that the Catholic Church alone has remained true to the mind of Christ."

"Oh, I know your line on that question," his friend replied impatiently, "but really you can't expect me to go into all that."

Whereupon Lunn concludes: "I fear not. Or, rather, I did not expect my friend or any other Protestant to go into all that and remain a Protestant."

Lunn closes the story of his spiritual Aeneid with the words of Hilaire Belloc who first set his feet on the path to Rome: "There is a city full, as are all cities of halt and maim, blind and evil and the rest; but it is the city of God. There are not two such Cities on earth. There is One. One thing in this world is different from all others. It has personality and a force. It is recognized, and (when recognized) most violently loved or hated. It is the Catholic Church. Within that household the human spirit has roof and hearth. Outside it is the Night."

#### *The Case of Chesterton*

The conversion of Arnold Lunn recalls that of his more famous compatriot, the late G. K. Chesterton, with which it has many elements in common. Both were led to take the step by logical reasoning and objective evidence. Emotion played little, if any, role in either case. Both are gifted literateurs with a wide acquaintance with history and European culture. Both had been at one time critics of the Church, and both passed through the stages of agnosticism, through the halfway station of Anglicanism in their quest for religious truth which terminated at Rome.

Let us examine the credentials and the lines of reasoning which prompted Chesterton to take the decisive step, and thus secure additional insight into that mysterious attraction of the Catholic Church which continues to draw the best minds not only of England, but of all the race, to seek shelter and repose under the expanse of her mighty dome. For today more than ever the dome of Michael Angelo over the tomb of Peter the Fisherman stands in a world of confusion, division and bewilderment as the symbol of that solitary unity, which transcends the differences of nations and of cultures and binds its vast army of four hundred and thirty million members in all the countries of the world with the strong and imperishable bond of a common faith.

England was shaken as with a mighty bomb in 1922 when G. K. Chesterton, the brilliant writer of paradox, announced his submission to Rome. A prominent Anglican

clergyman, Canon Headderly, voiced at that time the criticism of many against "the general muddleheadedness" of the Church which caused the departure of so gifted a writer. "We have never had such an apologist as G. K. Chesterton," he declared, "and yet he has hardly ever figured at a church meeting. - We prefer the dull logic of some dry-as-dust professor from Oxford to the sparkling paradox of the greatest wit of the century. Religion is still groaning under the weight of Puritanism and kill-joys in this country. Mr. Chesterton would lift us up, but we won't let him. We are still scared by mid-Victorian arguments about science and miracles. G. K. C. would deliver us, and keep us orthodox at the same time."

"But we would rather not be set free. Any one who courteously and fairly explodes Puritan fallacies is doing more good than he knows to the cause of true religion in England. Puritanism has virtually destroyed Sunday in thinking to preserve it. It has made religion suspected. It has taken away joy and beauty and love while it was doing the work of angels who make merry in heaven. Most of this sad work has been through sheer lack of humor, and this is partly why it can only be undone by humorists like Chesterton."

#### *"The Largest Sincerity"*

The *London Tablet*, expressing the joy of Catholics throughout the English-speaking world, said at that time: "For Catholics, indeed, his coming into the fold, if it should abate some of the pleasure and the pride they had in the friendly and forceful testimony of an acute outsider, removes at once and forever any misgiving as to the reality and the actuality of all his poetry and all his prose. The word has become the deed. All men may know for certain now that it meant more than an esthetic love for the Middle Ages; it was charged with duty as well as with beauty; it achieved, more than a merely literary sincerity, the largest sincerity in life."

Chesterton did not leave the Anglican Church as a result of pique or any emotional disturbance. He entered the Catholic Church because it is the Church established by Christ and presents the unmistakable credentials of its divine origin and of its authority to teach the gospel of its Founder to all

mankind. The Mother Church of historic Christianity possesses those paradoxical qualities which Chesterton was quick to perceive and quick to admire.

She is the greatest conservative force in the world, yet the most adventurous. She possesses the mellow wisdom of two thousand years and the eager enthusiasm of youth. She discarded the heresies of fifteen centuries ago which have become the novelties of today. She does not embrace every new scientific theory that is marshalled into the public square with the blare of trumpets and the beating of drums, because she does not wish to be a widow the day after tomorrow.

#### *A. Secondary Loyalty*

She smiles at the deadly seriousness of the nationalists sitting in the saddle of all the countries today and seeking to remake the world. She smiles because she has seen the idol of nationalism, along with many others, rise and fall. When Edith Cavell, one of the noblest martyrs of our modern religion of nationalism, was about to face the firing squad of earnest German soldiers, intent upon the service of the fatherland, she cried out: "I see now that patriotism is not enough." The cry stirred the Protestants of England as though it were a great and a startling discovery. To the Church, however, it was as ancient as the second of the two great commandments: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The loyalties of patriotism are secondary in time and in logic to the law of universal morality, to the two great commandments of love which contain the whole law and the prophets. To the nationalist who champions the totalitarian authority of the state, the authority to speak in matters of religion as in affairs of politics, she answers with the pulverizing plainness of the Book of Job: "Where were you when the foundations of the world were laid?" Contrasting her antiquity with the recency of any of the nations of Europe, the Church might well inquire of them: "Where were you when the foundations of the Church were laid?"

"It is absurd to forget," observes Chesterton, "that the Church itself received the first loyalties of men who had not yet even conceived the notion of founding such a national and separate state; that the Faith really was not only the

faith of our fathers, but the faith of our fathers before they had even named our fatherland."

*"Catholicism Is True"*

To a mind so multi-faceted as Chesterton's, which perceived the myriad charms of the Church and understood the mellow wisdom which enabled her to view with serenity the colossal trifles and the outworn novelties which were shaking the creeds of the sects asunder, it is no easy matter to point to the one set of credentials which appealed to him most. The one fact above all others, however, which overwhelmed him with its cogency and which is the common denominator of all her credentials, is the simple fact that *Catholicism is true*.

"The difficulty of explaining 'why I am a Catholic,'" says Chesterton, "is that there are ten thousand reasons amounting to one reason: that Catholicism is true. I could fill all my space with separate sentences each beginning with the words, 'It is the only thing that. . .'. As, for instance, (1) It is the only thing that really prevents a sin from being a secret. (2) It is the only thing in which the superior cannot be superior; in the sense of supercilious. (3) It is the only thing that frees a man from the degrading slavery of being a child of his age. (4) It is the only thing that talks as if it were the truth; as if it were a real messenger refusing to tamper with a real message. (5) It is the only type of Christianity that really contains every type of man; even the respectable man. (6) It is the only large attempt to change the world from the inside; working through wills and not laws; and so on."

*Bible on Witness Stand*

The weakness of the Protestant position in placing the Bible on the witness stand to decide every controversy that arose became evident to Chesterton at an early age. For he perceived that the Bible can speak only through living voices, only through its interpreters. When these interpreters, speaking ostensibly as the voice of the Bible, contradict each other, confusion results. When the attempt to solve the difficulty is made by enhancing the authority of the Bible as the sole word of God, needing no interpreter, confusion becomes worse confounded.

"I grew up in a world," writes Chesterton, "in which the

Protestants, who had just proved that Rome did not believe the Bible, were excitedly discovering that they did not believe the Bible themselves. Some of them even tried to combine the two condemnations and say that they were steps of progress. The next step in progress consisted in a man kicking his father for having locked up a book of such beauty and value, a book which the son then proceeded to tear into a thousand pieces. I early discovered that progress is worse than Protestantism so far as stupidity is concerned. But most of the freethinkers who were friends of mine happened to think sufficiently freely to see that the Higher Criticism was much more of an attack on Protestant Bible-worship than on Roman authority. Anyhow, my family and friends were more concerned with the opening of the book of Darwin than the book of Daniel; and most of them regarded the Hebrew Scriptures as if they were Hittite sculptures. But, even then, it would seem odd to worship the sculptures as gods and then smash them as idols and still go on blaming somebody else for not having worshipped them enough."

The truth of the Catholic Church, points out Chesterton, is like a magnet with powers of attraction and of repulsion. The repulsion arises from the vague fear that one may be caught in a baited trap. But the bait is simply the truth. "The moment men cease to pull against the Catholic Church," he says, "they feel a tug toward it. The moment they cease to shout it down they begin to listen to it with pleasure. The moment they try to be fair to it they begin to be fond of it. But when that affection has passed a certain point it begins to take on the tragic and menacing grandeur of a great love affair."

*"Trusting-place of All Truths"*

There is something majestic in the manner in which the Church has withstood all the heresies of the centuries and all the vagaries of human thought and speculation. The procession of paganism, bibliolatry, absolute imperialism, monarchies, democracies, representative or alleged, down to dictatorships, the fashion of the hour, pass before her in a long parade. From her throne on the stairs of the centuries she watches them come and go. She can live under any form of government because her concern is with the souls of men and her kingdom is of the spirit.



"There is no end," says Chesterton, "to the dissolution of ideas, the destruction of all tests of truth, that has become possible since men abandoned the attempt to keep a central and civilized Truth, to contain all truths and trace out and refute all errors. Since then, each group has taken one truth at a time and spent the time in turning it into a falsehood. We have had nothing but movements; or in other words, monomanias. But the Church is not a movement but a meeting-place; the trysting-place of all the truths in the world."

"The Church is a house with a hundred gates," observes Chesterton, "and no two men enter at exactly the same angle." The path which this gifted mind traveled was that of objective evidence and logical reasoning. The mysterious attraction of the Church is found upon investigation to be simply the fact that she is the truth. This was the object of his long quest. He embraced the Church as a wayward son embraces the mother from whom he has long been separated but whom he has never ceased to love. In her tender arms, he finds rest and peace at last. Thus does the Church continue to draw the finest minds to her with the irresistibility with which the magnet draws the steel. Thus the trek toward Rome goes on.

### Discussion Aids

Name the outstanding convert of the 19th century to Catholicism. Name five modern English converts to Catholicism. Trace the steps by which Arnold Lunn entered the Church. Where does he find H. G. Wells vulnerable? What is Lunn's defense against his modernist critic? What was Rome's attraction for Lunn? Compare the case of Chesterton with Lunn's. Discuss Chesterton's credentials and his lines of reasoning. In what year did Chesterton enter the Church? Discuss his attitude on the great fact, "Catholicism is true," on the Bible as the sole rule of faith, and the Church as "the trysting place of all truths."

### Practices:

Read Arnold Lunn's book, "Now I See."

Read Chesterton's, "The Everlasting Man."

Increase your devotion to the Holy Ghost and pray for conversions.

## Part II

### IS THE CHURCH AN INFALLIBLE TEACHER?

#### The Basis of the Church's Teaching Authority

## Chapter IX

### WHAT THINK YOU OF CHRIST?

#### *A Study of the Divinity of Christ*

The gradual discarding of many of the traditional doctrines of historic Christianity has now reached such a stage, that the central fact of the Christian religion, namely, the divinity of Christ, is no longer held by millions of our fellow countrymen who still profess to be Christians. Far from being confined to the laity, the waning belief in this fundamental dogma of the Christian religion would seem to be even more marked among the ministers. Thus Professor Shirley Case of the Divinity School of Chicago University, in a recent work on "Jesus Through the Centuries," pictures Christ as a mere man whose moral code, while suitable for the simple pastoral life of the Palestine of His day, stands in need of radical overhauling to make it fit the complex social and industrial life of our modern day.

It has become the fashion to speak of Jesus as a social reformer, comparable to Socrates or to Ghandi. But there is a conspicuous shying away from the traditional view of the revelation of Jesus as supreme, final, and unique. This modern vogue is reflected in the letters of two writers appearing in *The Christian Century*.<sup>1</sup> One is from a Christian Association secretary who says: "Because I look at life as a growing process, and the universe characterized by change, I have come to the position where I assert that the nature of religion is growth. The notion that the Christian revelation is final, that Christ is the absolute, the complete, in my mind has far-reaching consequences for ill that we are just beginning to realize."

The second is from a university instructor, who writes: "We can, and by all the logic of an unfinished universe, will, either accidentally or by the pains of growing effort, come upon philosophies of life which far transcend that of Jesus,

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<sup>1</sup>June 8, 1932, page 731.

and possibly patterns of living that will be inconsistent with that taught by Jesus."

### *The Shift from the Divine*

That the above views are not simply those of a few isolated individuals, but are typical of those prevailing in many Protestant denominations is clearly shown in the study of Professor George Herbert Betts, "The Beliefs of 700 Ministers." By comparing the beliefs of 500 ministers concerning Christ and those of 200 theological students about to enter the ministry, Professor Betts finds that the following conception of Jesus is becoming increasingly common among ministers:

"He was conceived and born as other men are; he was not wholly free in his earthly life from moral wrong; he neither raised others from the dead nor himself rose from the dead in physical form; in his earthly life he was subject to the limitations of knowledge and science which applied to his day; man's redemption does not rest alone on his suffering and death; he will not appear in a second visible coming upon earth."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, on the basis of the above study, only 44% of the newer recruits to the ministry believe that "Jesus is equal in power, knowledge and authority with God," as compared with 76% of the older ministers. Only 42% of the younger preachers believe "that after Jesus was dead and buried he actually rose from the dead, leaving the tomb empty," as contrasted with 84% of the older ministers. Such is the trend toward the sloughing off of the supernatural and the divine from the Christian religion which is so marked in the Protestant denominations in America today. The study clearly shows that the fundamental truths of historic Christianity, especially the divinity of Christ and the finality of His moral code, are being surrendered all along the line by the leading Protestant denominations.

This condition is observed not with glee but with profound regret. It means that instead of having allies in the battle against the growing forces of naturalism, rationalism and agnosticism, the Catholic Church will have to bear the increasing brunt of the attack, and perhaps ultimately fight

<sup>1</sup>Page 85.

the battle alone—at least as far as organized institutional help is concerned.

### *No Compromise*

In the face of this general breakdown of faith in the traditional tenets of Christianity, the Catholic Church stands today as she has stood throughout nineteen centuries, unfaltering and unswerving in her adherence to the plain teaching of Jesus Christ. With her there is no compromise with the time-spirit, no trimming of sails to suit every new wind that blows. She preaches "Jesus Christ, yesterday and today; and the same forever." She adopts as her own, the reply of Peter to the query addressed to the Apostles by the Saviour, when seeing many of the Jews leave Him rather than accept His teaching that He would give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, He turned to the Apostles themselves, asking, "Will you also go away?" Peter answered in behalf of all the Apostles, "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."<sup>1</sup>

With vast millions of so-called Christians deserting the Master by denying His plain teachings concerning His own divine character, the Church takes her stand by the side of her first pontiff, the chief of the Apostles, and says: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Of all the teachings of Christ, there are none which are more important or which have such far-reaching consequences as those concerning His own divine nature. If Christ be not God, but a mere man, then the religion which He founded has no divine authority behind it, no finality to its moral code, no uniqueness to its teachings, no mark which differentiates it essentially and generically from Hindooism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism, or the other religions of the world. In short, the authoritativeness of the Christian religion stands or falls with the divine character of its Founder.

### *Peter's Profession*

What now is the evidence concerning Christ's divinity? I shall not ask our dear non-Catholic reader to believe in the deity of Jesus simply because the Catholic Church teaches that truth. I shall ask him to examine the plain teachings of

<sup>1</sup>John 6:69.



the Saviour on this point as recorded in the gospels. For the purpose of this study, it will not be necessary to regard the gospels as divinely inspired documents, but simply as truthful narratives. Surely every person who calls himself a Christian will grant that the evangelists did not invent the character of Jesus, but that they recorded the truthful story of His life and teachings.

For the sake of brevity, we shall pass over the evidence which implies the deity of Jesus, such as the passages wherein He speaks not as an ambassador but in His own name and by His own authority. We shall come at once to the direct and explicit teaching of the Master that He is in literal truth the Son of God, consubstantial with the Father in Heaven.

The first scene occurs at Caesarea Philippi. Christ asks the disciples, "Whom do men say that the Son of man is? But they said: Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets."<sup>1</sup> Not satisfied with these responses, Christ asks the disciples: "But whom do you say that I am?" It is at this time that Peter makes his memorable profession of faith in Christ's divinity, saying: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."

#### *Peter's Testimony Upheld*

Does the Saviour tell Peter that he is mistaken, that he has been carried away by his enthusiasm, and that he attributes to his Leader a divine nature which the latter does not really possess? If Peter were mistaken, it would have been the duty not only of Christ, but of any honest man, to correct Peter and to remove a false impression under which he was laboring. Does Christ tell Peter he is mistaken? On the contrary the Master confirms the truth of Peter's statement by assuring him that his answer was divinely revealed unto him, and by rewarding him in a striking manner for his profession of faith:

And Jesus answering, said to him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 16:13-14.

And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."

Here then is a dramatic scene in which the Master with the skill of a great teacher carefully prepares the background which makes Peter's unequivocal profession of faith in Christ's divinity stand out as a flash of lightning against a darkened sky. It is obvious that this Sonship of Christ is not used here in the vague sense, in which all good Christians are sons of God by grace and adoption. It is clear that Christ is infinitely more than that—namely, the Son of God by nature, that is, consubstantial with God. For this reason, Christ is declared by St. John to be "the *only-begotten* of the Father, full of grace and truth."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Christ before Caiphas*

Not less lucid, nor less dramatic than the scene of the profession of Christ's divinity which occurred at Caesarea Philippi was that which had its setting before the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of the Hebrews in which not Peter but Christ Himself is the speaker. The Master is charged with the crime of claiming divine honors, that is, with claiming to be the Son of God. Among the Jews this offense was punished with death. Caiphas the high priest addressed Christ in the solemn words: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be Christ the Son of God."<sup>2</sup> Jesus knew full well that if He answered in the affirmative, He would be signing His own death warrant. Does He seek to escape the impending doom by giving an equivocal or misleading reply? Does He seek to escape by the simple expedient of denying His own divinity?

On the contrary, without a moment's hesitation, without the slightest equivocation, He answers simply and clearly: "Thou hast said it." This is the Hebrew manner of saying: "Thou hast spoken the truth: I am in very deed." Immediately upon hearing this reply, Caiphas rent his garments saying: "He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy;

<sup>1</sup>John 1:14.

<sup>2</sup>Matt. 26:63.

what think you?" But they answering, said: "He is guilty of death." The fact that the Sanhedrin accused Christ of *blasphemy* showed that they regarded Him as claiming *true* sonship, and not merely the Messiahship. For the false claim to the latter would have been mere prevarication and not blasphemy.

In literal truth therefore it can be said that Christ went to His death upon Calvary's gibbet rather than deny, or even equivocate concerning His own divine character. How is it possible then for any person, much less a Christian, who regards the gospels even as historical documents, to doubt or to deny the plain teaching of Jesus Christ concerning His own divinity?

#### *Confirmed by Miracles*

The Master not only declared that He was divine, but He confirmed it with signs and miracles, especially the miracle of His resurrection. Thus on more than one occasion He appealed to the Jews to believe His works, if they would not believe His words. "The works themselves which I do, give testimony of me, that the Father hath sent me."<sup>1</sup> And again He says to them: "Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? Otherwise believe for the very works' sake."<sup>2</sup>

St. Peter merely followed the example of his Master in appealing to the wonderful works of the latter as the convincing evidence of His Messiahship and of His divine Sonship. Thus on the first Christian Pentecost morning, when the Apostles are starting out on their sublime mission of winning the world for Christ, St. Peter thus addresses the Jews: "Ye men of Israel hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you, as you know."<sup>3</sup>

The effect made not only upon the disciples but also upon the multitudes who witnessed the miracles wrought by Jesus is reflected in the words of Nicodemus: "We know that Thou art come a teacher from God; for no man can do

<sup>1</sup>John 5:36.

<sup>2</sup>John 14:11-12.

<sup>3</sup>Acts 2:22.

these signs which Thou doest, unless God be with him."<sup>1</sup> Indeed St. John says explicitly that he has recorded the miracles of Jesus for the express purpose of enabling his readers to believe in the deity of Christ. "Many other signs," he says, "also did Jesus in the sight of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*"<sup>2</sup>

Even if there remained any traces of uncertainty in the minds of any of the disciples as to the deity of Jesus after witnessing the numerous miracles He had wrought, surely those vestiges must have been dispelled by the stupendous miracle of the Resurrection. This occurrence confirmed by such an abundance of testimony, including that of the Apostles who spoke with the Master after His Resurrection, would seem to have removed the last vestiges of uncertainty from the minds of the disciples as to the divine Sonship of Jesus. Even the centurion who had assisted in the crucifixion of the Master felt compelled by the signs and wonders occurring at the time of the Saviour's death, to cry out his belief in the divinity of Jesus. "Now the centurion," says St. Matthew, "and they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake, and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this was the Son of God."<sup>3</sup>

In the light of all the evidence thus far presented, which indeed is but a fragment of the great mass filling the Gospels, it would not seem to be too much to say that if Christ be not divine, then the New Testament considered not only as an inspired document, but even simply as an historical work, falls to the ground and with it the whole superstructure of traditional Christianity reposing upon it. For the only way to escape from belief in the divine Sonship of Jesus is by impugning the historical truthfulness of the gospel—a procedure for which there is no scientific justification.

#### *Christ of the Early Church*

In a desperate effort to escape the compelling evidence of the testimony of the Scriptures as to the divine Sonship of

<sup>1</sup>John 3:2.

<sup>2</sup>John 20:30.

<sup>3</sup>Matt. 27:54.

Jesus, certain so-called Higher Critics and modernists in general contend that the early Church did not have any definite teaching on this point. For the first three centuries, they claim, the Church did not know her own mind, or rather had not as yet made it up, concerning the personality of Christ. Her members were permitted to look upon Christ as a sort of inferior deity, who was above all men but lower than the Father, and therefore not strictly divine. This dogma they allege reflects the results of three centuries of evolution, not reaching its crystalized form until the Council of Nice in 325, when belief in Christ's absolute divinity became a necessary condition for membership in the Church.

If this view were true, it would constitute one of the insoluble riddles of the world. For the Apostles and disciples not only considered Christ as God, but many of them died as martyrs for that belief. Would it not be passing strange if they did not communicate to their converts the central article of the faith for which they were willing to suffer not only tortures and imprisonment but death itself? Let us, however, pass over this theoretical consideration of its extreme improbability and look at the facts themselves.

The teachings of the early Church can best be perceived from the profession of faith required by converts to her fold. From the very first it was the custom to require such a profession before the converts were admitted to baptism. To secure uniformity, a set formula was adopted which reflected the most fundamental articles of the faith then taught by the Church. The formula in general use during the first three centuries has been preserved for us, at least in part, by Tertullian,<sup>1</sup> by St. Justin<sup>2</sup> and by St. Irenaeus<sup>3</sup>. All these lived and wrote in the second century. Even hostile critics now generally admit that this formula traces its origin to a period not later than the first century, and that it was common to the Church both in the East and in the West.

In this formula, belief in the divinity of Christ is thus explicitly set forth as a necessary condition for entrance into the fold: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born by the Holy

<sup>1</sup>De Praescript c. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Apol. I, 61, 1.

<sup>3</sup>Adv. Haer. I, 10.

Ghost of the Virgin Mary." It is identical with the corresponding article of the Apostles' Creed which we Christians of the twentieth century recite, thus professing the same faith as our co-religionists of the first and second centuries. Eighteen hundred years have not altered either our faith in the divine Sonship of Jesus or its eternal expression.

### *Testimony of the Fathers*

The writings of the Fathers of the early Church abound in references to this central article of their faith. St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius of Antioch, and St. Justin Martyr lay special stress upon it. In his Apology to the Roman Emperor, written toward the end of the second century, Athenagoras of Athens writes: "Not only is the Father God, but also the Son and the Holy Spirit. In these three divine persons there is unity of Godhead, and in this unity of Godhead there is distinction of persons."<sup>1</sup> St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes at about the same time: "If Christ forgives sins, if Christ is Mediator between God and man, this is because He is really a divine person."<sup>2</sup>

It was to the universal belief of the early Christians in this great truth that St. Polycarp in the middle of the second century bore witness when bound to the stake to be burned alive, he cried out: "For all things, O God, do I praise and bless Thee, together with the Eternal and Heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy well-beloved Son, with Whom, to Thee and the Holy Ghost, be glory, both now and forever. Amen."

The same great truth was emphasized by St. Hippolytus of Rome, by Tertullian of Carthage, by Origen and Clement of Alexandria, by St. Methodius of Tyre and by Melito of Sardis. Indeed every writer of the period who referred to the matter, and whose writings have been preserved, taught the same doctrine.

That the mind of the infant Church was very definitely made up on the matter is evident likewise from her manner of dealing with heretics who presumed to deny the true and absolute divinity of Jesus Christ. Thus when Cerinthus toward the end of the first century proclaimed that Jesus was

<sup>1</sup>C. 80.

<sup>2</sup>Adv. Haer. III, 2, 2.



only the son of Mary and Joseph, and not of God, and that He was not, therefore, true God, the whole Church rose up in protest against his heresy and shunned him as an apostate.<sup>1</sup> The same vigorous condemnation was sounded when the Gnostics, and later on the Arians, assigned to the Saviour a middle place between the highest angels and the Supreme God, and thus reduced Christ to a sort of inferior deity. Without hesitation the Church promptly branded them as heretics who departed from the faith delivered to them by the Apostles.

So universal was the belief in the divine Sonship of Jesus among the members of the early Church that they looked upon this as the distinguishing mark of the true Christian. The modern non-Catholic writer, Liddon, accurately mirrors the faith of the Church in the first three centuries when he testifies that "the truth of Christ's absolute Godhead was beyond doubt the very central feature of the teaching of the ante-Nicene Church, even when Church teachers had not yet recognized all that it necessarily involved, and had not yet elaborated the accurate statement of its relationship to other truths around it."

#### *Origen Replies to Celsus*

The Christians of the first three centuries not only believed in the divinity of Jesus, but they translated their belief into action by worshipping Him as God. This fact stands out with special clearness from the charges of polytheism and even of idolatry brought against them by their enemies. Thus Celsus, a scoffing pagan philosopher of the third century, contended that the Christians had no right to criticize the polytheism of the pagan world, since their own worship of Christ was essentially polytheistic. "The Christians," he declared, "worshipped no God, no not even a demon, but only a dead man. If they do not wish to worship the pagan gods," he said, "why should they not rather pay their devotions to some of their own prophets than to a man who had been crucified by the Jews?"

Origen, the greatest of the early Christian writers, defended the Christians from the attacks of Celsus. This he did, not by denying the charge that they worshipped Christ,

<sup>1</sup>St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* V.

but by showing that the Saviour was worthy of such adoration because He was God. "The gods of the pagans," he answers Celsus, "were unworthy of worship; the Jewish prophets had no claim to it; on the other hand, Christ was worshipped not as a mere man, but as the Son of God, as God Himself. If Celsus," he continues, "had understood the meaning of this, 'I and the Father are One,' or what the Son of God says in His prayer, 'As I and Thou art One,' he would never have imagined that we worship any but the God who is over all, for Christ says, 'The Father is in Me, and I in Him.'"<sup>1</sup>

The evidence of the belief of the early Church in the divinity of Jesus would be sadly incomplete, however, if we did not consider the testimony of the Christian martyrs. They speak to us not merely with words, but with the far greater eloquence of their sufferings and their deaths. Gladly did some permit their bodies to be coated with pitch and tar to be burned alive to illumine the gladiatorial contests of the Romans. Others surrendered themselves to be torn limb from limb by the wild lions in the sand covered arena. Still others placed their heads upon the swordsman's block, while their companions were nailed in ignominy to the cross. These tortures and others more excruciating still they suffered cheerfully and with joy, rather than save their lives and gain the promised preferments by denying their God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

#### *Voices of the Martyred*

They speak to us with voices that thunder in our inner ear. Their heroic deaths cry out in protest against the mockery of the twentieth-century "modernists," ministers, and Christian association secretaries who would relegate the divine Founder of the Christian religion to the status of a mere man. Their life's blood has placed upon their faith the seal of a conviction which neither time nor eternity can break. Instead of growing weaker with the lapse of centuries their voices grow in volume and in strength, so that he must needs be deaf indeed who does not hear their thunderings: "We suffered and died for no mere man, but for our

<sup>1</sup>Contr. Cels. VIII, 12.

God and Saviour, Jesus Christ!" In their accents the attentive ear can discern the echoing of the voices of the Apostles, and of Christ Himself.

In order to realize what it meant for the martyrs to profess their belief in Christ as true God, and seal that faith with their life's blood, it will be helpful to read the account of their ordeals as handed down by an eye-witness. Many such accounts have been preserved. The following one which even hostile critics admit to be genuine will serve as a sample. Before the tribunals of the prefect Calvisianus, there had been brought Euplius, a deacon of the Church at Catania, on the charge of being a Christian. According to the usual custom, the prefect endeavored to persuade the prisoner to renounce Christ and offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, promising him freedom for so doing. Perceiving that his entreaties were in vain, he ordered the prisoner to be stretched upon the rack. An eye-witness thus narrates what followed:

"And while being racked, Euplius said: I thank Thee, O Christ, Guard Thou me, who for Thee am suffering thus. The prefect interrupted him, saying: Cease, Euplius, from this folly. Adore the gods, and thou shalt be set at liberty. Euplius answered: I adore Christ; I utterly hate the demons. Do what thou wilt: I am a Christian. Add yet other tortures: I am a Christian. After he had been tortured a long while, the executioners were bidden hold their hands. Then the Prefect said: Unhappy man, adore the gods. Pay worship to Mars, Apollo and Aesculapius. Euplius replied: I worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. I adore the Holy Trinity, beside Whom there is no God. Perish the gods who did not make heaven and earth, and all that is in them. I am a Christian.

"The Prefect again said: Offer sacrifice, if thou wouldest be set at liberty. But Euplius answered: I sacrifice myself only to Christ my God: more than this I cannot do. Thy efforts are to no purpose; I am a Christian. Then orders were given that he should be tortured again; and whilst every bone was wrenched from its socket, he cried out: Thanks to Thee, O Christ. Help me, O Christ! For Thee do I suffer thus, O Christ. When finally all his strength had left

him and his voice was gone, he still repeated these same exclamations with his lips only."<sup>1</sup>

In the dying words of Euplius, there is echoed the confession of faith in Christ's divinity that came from the lips not of hundreds but of thousands of martyrs. With their last breath, they breathed the name of their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. That long line of martyrs, consisting of men, women and children, who withstood the allurements of the prefects and the refined cruelties of the executioners, who poured out their treasures and their life's blood for their Saviour, reveal to us the faith of the infant Church with a clarity and a certainty that far transcend the power of mere words to express. Their profession of faith is written in the deathless language of immortal deed.

### *The Juggling of Modernists*

The writer would like to rest the case here. But there is a school of thought in which Jesus is spoken of as a great social reformer, a noble, ethical personality, but not divine, which demands at least brief consideration.

This school of writers, of which Renan stands as an early symbol and in which an increasing number of Protestant ministers are now to be found, depicts Jesus as wiser than Socrates, a greater law-giver than Solon, a nobler ethical personality than Plato or Spinoza. They speak in superlative terms of His mercy and sympathy. They exalt His humility and mildness. They marvel at His keen insights into human nature. They style Him the noblest and the best of all mankind. They stop just short of crossing the gap separating the human from the divine—carefully refraining from calling Him God.

The following description of Christ by Rev. Dr. Herbert Parrish, an Episcopalian clergyman of note, is typical of the manner in which modernists in general and an increasing number of Protestant ministers speak of Jesus as a beautiful personality while they studiously withhold from Him the crowning glory of divinity: "Man stands at the apex of the visible creation amid the vast eternities of time and space.

<sup>1</sup>Ruinart, *Acta Mart.* p. 439, as quoted by B. J. Otten, S. J., in *The Reason Why*, p. 284.

Before him rises the significant figure of the Christ. No human life compares with the bright and beautiful history of this young Galilean teacher. Greater than Confucius or the Buddha, more persuasive than the dreams of Plato or the arguments of Aristotle, his words have had more effect upon history than the marching of the armies of Alexander or the conquests of Caesar. The famous men in the records of the race pale beside him.

"Leaving aside the slender story of his miraculous birth and the discordant accounts of his resurrection, by which he was accounted an equal to the demigods of the pagan mysteries of the Mediterranean littoral of his day, and paying no heed to the creeds, decrees, conciliar decisions, hair-splitting definitions of theologians, by which it was attempted to reach an exact account of his relation to the divine essence, as a result of which he has become in many minds a kind of second God, it is of the highest value to consider merely his human character and the records of his teaching. . . Hence, as a man he is the wonder and admiration of the world."<sup>1</sup>

It will be noted that Dr. Parrish is most anxious to efface from the character of Jesus all the lineaments of the divine, while elevating Him to the highest ethical plane as a man or even as a superman of the Nietzsche type. But one wonders: What about the repeated declarations of Christ to be one with the Father, to be divine? What about His profession of His divine Sonship before Caiaphas—a profession that sent Him to Calvary's gibbet? Dr. Parrish has a facile solution of these "astounding egoisms" of His character. Jesus suffered from a mental complex! The cause of His strange hallucination is now laid bare and all mystery fades away.

#### *The Discovery of a Complex*

Thus says Dr. Parrish: "His teaching was profound and penetrating. In the moral and spiritual sphere he is admittedly without a rival. Whatever traditional sources he may have used he gave a colorful simplicity and an added touch to age-long wisdom. The modern critic may conclude that he had what the psychoanalysts would call a complex in that he was convinced that his interior life was illuminated by the divine indwelling and the egoisms attributed to him

<sup>1</sup>A New God for America, Century Co., N. Y., 1928, p. 212.

are of the most astounding sort. He was one with the Father. But there is no reason to think that the mind of Jesus received its illumination in any way different from that of other men. As in the cases of the inventors, discoverers, artists, and musicians cited, the nights of prayer and meditation, the long preparation invited to the clear mind of a supreme genius an influx of supernal light."<sup>1</sup>

Here, indeed, are some fine antics of juggling. On the one hand, Christ is a great moral and spiritual teacher—"admittedly without a rival." On the other hand, this Christ who says He is one with the Father, who tells us He "shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty: and all nations shall be gathered together before him,"<sup>2</sup> is the victim of megalomania, suffering delusions of grandeur, and His testimony is, therefore, thoroughly unreliable. Is this not a capital illustration of a man blowing hot and cold at the same time? Is it not a clear case of a person contradicting with one breath that which was uttered with the previous one? Within the limits of a single paragraph, Christ is depicted as the greatest moral and spiritual teacher in the world. Then suddenly the mask falls. Christ is disclosed to us as suffering from a mental complex, experiencing egoisms "of the most astounding sort," which render His utterances so many hallucinations, the expressions of a diseased mind.

The writer must confess his total inability to hug to his bosom these two mutually contradictory portraits of Jesus. How different from the conclusion of Dr. Parrish was that reached by that other erstwhile sceptic, Thomas, who doubted the testimony of the other Apostles that Christ had appeared to them during his absence. When later the Master appeared in their midst, "the doors being shut," He said to the doubting Thomas: "Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." Then it was that the last vestige of doubt was dispelled from the mind of Thomas, and falling upon his knees, he says simply: "My Lord, and my God."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A New God for America Century Co., N. Y., 1928, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Matt. 25-31.

<sup>3</sup>John 20:28.



*God or Deceiver?*

Hence, of all the positions which one may take in regard to the character of Jesus, this position of the modernists as expressed by Dr. Parrish is, in the judgment of the writer, the most illogical and untenable. Why? For the simple reason that if Jesus is simply a good and truthful man, He must be God. For Jesus claims to be one with the Father, claims to be divine. He goes to His death upon Calvary for His insistence upon the fact. He teaches His disciples this fact. He sends them out to teach the world this truth, and to be willing to die like Himself rather than deny it. The whole Christian world has believed this truth upon His authority.

Now if Christ be not divine, He is either a wilful deceiver or is the victim of hallucinations, which blight His whole character and personality. If He is the unconscious victim of delusions, then He is equally untrustworthy as an ethical teacher or guide. In either event, His whole character and personality wither away, and He would be totally unworthy of the encomiums heaped upon Him in such profusion by the rationalists and modernists above described. Not only that, but He would be the greatest enemy of God, usurping the sole right of the latter to the adoration of mankind. Yes, even more than that, since Christ wrought miracles in confirmation of His claim to be divine, if He be not God, then there is no God in Heaven!

Hence the relentless logic of the Catholic Church, scorning such pathetic compromises as the modernists have fallen into, proclaims that Christ is either God or a deceiver. To thoughtful minds there can be no third alternative. To her mind, truth above all other considerations is paramount. That is why today she holds fast to the truth of the divinity of Christ, undisturbed by the defections of the faint-hearted all around her. She realizes that it is the divine character of Christ that gives authority to His religious teachings and validity to His moral code. She realizes, furthermore, that it is not a matter of indifference to the Saviour as to whether men acknowledge Him as true God, or deny Him before the Sanhedrins of the twentieth century. For in her memory are enshrined the clear words of the divine Saviour: "Every,

one therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

*The Same Reply*

Christ remains the most potent influence in the life of the world. As Richter has said so beautifully of Him, "The purest among the strong and the strongest among the pure, Christ lifted with His wounded hands empires from their hinges and changed the streams of ages." Even the sensual Rousseau perceives the lineaments of the divine in the character of Christ as depicted in the Gospels, and gives expression to his conviction in the following striking lines:

"I confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospels has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction; how mean, how contemptible they are, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage whose history it contains should be himself a mere man? Do we find that He assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in His manners! What an effecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in His maxims! What profound wisdom in His discourses! What presence of mind in His replies! How great the command over His passions! Where is the man, where is the philosopher who could so live and so die, without weakness, without ostentation? . . . Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God."<sup>2</sup>

To the query which Christ addressed to the Pharisees nineteen centuries ago, "What think you of Christ? Whose Son is he?" the Church replies in the twentieth century in the words uttered by Peter in the first: "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God."

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 10:32-33.

<sup>2</sup>Emile, book 4.

### Discussion Aids

What is the central fact of Christianity? Give a few examples of non-Catholic attitude towards this fact. Give main conclusions to be drawn from Professor Betts' study. Examine the evidence for Christ's divinity from:

1. Gospel testimony.
  - a. Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 27).
  - b. Christ before the Sanhedrin (Matt. 28). Analyze the charge of blasphemy.
2. Miracles.
  - a. Christ's own claims (John 5:36; 14:11-12).
  - b. The Resurrection.

When did the dogma of Christ's divinity crystallize? Name several ante-Nicene witnesses from among the Fathers of the Church. Who were some of the early heretics on the doctrine? Reproduce substance of Origen's argument against Celsus. How is the testimony of the martyrs to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ convincing? Analyze the juggling of the modernists, using Rev. Dr. Herbert Parrish as an example. Defend the contention that Christ was either God or a deceiver. Close the case by quoting Peter's words at Caesarea Philippi.

#### Practices:

Make Karl Adam's *The Son of God* part of your library. Read it thoughtfully.

Salute Christ in the Holy Eucharist, especially at the time of the Elevation, saying with St. Thomas, "My Lord and My God!"

Prepare yourself to defend the central fact of Christianity, the divinity of Christ, by reading and meditation.

## Chapter X

### THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE POPE

#### *A Divine Safeguard Against Error*

There is probably no dogma of the Catholic religion, which is so frequently misunderstood, and which occasions so much opposition on the part of our non-Catholic friends, as that which proclaims the infallible teaching authority of the Church as centered in the person of her supreme head, the Pope, the ruler of Christ's Church on earth. Let me invite our non-Catholic readers to consider this question in a calm, friendly manner. I am confident they will find that what they really wage war against is not papal infallibility as held by the Catholic Church, but a caricature of that teaching which exists only in their minds.

I would ask but one favor of them: That they approach this discussion with an *open mind*. To establish the truthfulness and the reasonableness of this teaching of our holy faith, I shall appeal not to the authority of the Church, but to the words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and to the court of our common understanding.

First, let us consider what papal infallibility does *not* mean. Contrary to the conception of many people, infallibility does not mean that the pope is inspired. The Apostles and Evangelists received this gift, and their writings are accepted as the revealed Word of God. But the Church does not teach that the Pope is inspired, or that he receives a divine revelation properly so-called.

Thus the Vatican Council declares: "For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter in order that they might spread abroad new doctrine which He reveals, but that, under His assistance, they might guard inviolably, and with fidelity explain, the revelation or deposit of faith handed down by the Apostles."

*Confused with Sinlessness*

Secondly, infallibility does not signify that the Pope is impeccable or incapable of moral wrong. Many people are in the habit of pointing to some one pontiff, whose character is not entirely free from blemishes, and saying: "See, there is a Pope who was guilty of a misdeed. That proves that he was not infallible, and, therefore, that none of the Popes is." The answer is simple. The objection does not come within speaking distance of the meaning of infallibility. Why? Because infallibility does not mean sinlessness or freedom from all human weaknesses or shortcomings.

As a matter of fact the Popes have been, with few exceptions, men of virtuous lives. Twenty-nine out of the first thirty pontiffs died as martyrs for the faith. Out of the two hundred and sixty-one who have sat upon the Chair of Peter, seventy-nine are invoked upon our altars as saints of God because of their eminent holiness. Only about half a dozen have been charged with serious moral lapses. This is a strikingly small proportion when it is remembered that one out of the twelve chosen by Christ Himself was a Judas Iscariot.

Even if a great majority of the Pontiffs, however, should have led vicious lives, this circumstance would not have impaired the prerogative of infallibility. This was bestowed upon the office they occupied, not for the protection of their morals, but for the guidance of their judgment in their religious teaching. Thus, for example, a judge is clothed by the laws of our country with certain legal power and authority. If in his private life he were guilty of some moral indiscretions, this circumstance would not rob his decisions of their validity. His authority in court is not dependent upon the character of his private life. It is conferred upon him by virtue of the office which he holds.

So, likewise, the prerogative of infallibility is conferred upon the office of the papacy, and is dependent in no way upon the private life of the incumbent. Like the legal authority of a judge, it is conferred upon the office for the welfare of the society for which such an office was established.

*Acknowledges Frailties*

As a matter of fact, the pontiff proclaims the frailties which he has in common with all humanity. Each morning, at the beginning of Mass, he says at the foot of the altar in all humility: "I confess to Almighty God, and to His saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed." Likewise, at the Offertory of the Mass, he prays: "Receive, O Holy Father, Almighty, everlasting God, this oblation which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer for my innumerable sins, offenses and negligences."

Despite the eminence of his office, the Pope does not pretend to be exempt from either the frailties or the temptations which constitute the common lot of all humanity. Not for a moment does he claim an utter sinlessness of life because of the mark of infallibility inhering in the office he holds.

In view of these facts, is it not strange that ministers of the Christian gospel should seek to discredit the dogma of papal infallibility by telling their congregations that there have been sinful Popes? In what manner are the interests of the Prince of truth advanced by deliberately misrepresenting the teachings of the Catholic Church on this point? Surely Protestantism is not strengthened, nor is Catholicism weakened, by the artifice of building a sham opponent, a man of straw, and then with much gusto demolishing it.

*Sciences Not Included*

Thirdly, infallibility does not mean that the Pope is free from the possibility of error in discussing questions of natural science, such as physics, geology, astronomy, or medicine—matters which involve in no way the deposit of revealed truth. Neither does the inerrability of the pontiff extend to purely political questions, such as the form of government a nation ought to adopt, or the candidates for whom Catholic citizens ought to vote. It does not, therefore, restrict the freedom of the scientists nor trespass upon the civil authority of the state.

Fourthly, infallibility does not signify that the pontiff is immune from liability to error in any domain when he speaks merely as a private teacher. In this capacity he is liable to err even in matters of faith and morals. Thus if a



pope, like Benedict XIV, were to write a treatise on canon law, his work would be subject to criticism in the same manner as that of any other Doctor of the Church.

#### *Real Meaning*

*What, then, does infallibility really mean?* Simply this: When the Pope in his official capacity, with the fullness of his authority, as successor of St. Peter and head of the Church on earth, proclaims a doctrine on faith or morals binding on the whole Church, he is preserved from error. It is to be noted that three conditions are required: (1) The Pope must speak *ex cathedra*, i. e., from the Chair of Peter, in his official capacity. (2) The decision must be binding on the whole Church. (3) It must be on a matter of faith or morals.

The Pope has no authority to invent a new doctrine. He is not the author of revelation, but only its interpreter and expounder. He has no more authority to break a divine law or to distort an iota of Scripture than you or I. His function is to hand down unchanged the deposit of divine truth to all generations of men.

#### *Similar to Supreme Court*

His office in the interpretation of Holy Scripture is fundamentally the same as that of the Supreme Court of the United States in the interpretation of the Constitution. When a difference of opinion arises as to the construction of a constitutional provision, the question is referred in the last resort to the Supreme Court at Washington. When the chief justice with his associates pronounces judgment upon it, that decision is accepted by all parties as final and irrevocable by any other court.

Every citizen of our country praises the wisdom of the founding fathers in arranging this tribunal for the peaceful adjudication of disputes concerning the meaning of the Constitution, which the fathers foresaw would inevitably arise. Without such a court, the Constitution would soon be torn into shreds by conflicting interests. Anarchy, secession and civil war would speedily displace the political union of so many states having diverse racial complexions and different economic interests.

That the Union has been preserved is traceable to the existence of the Supreme Court. Indeed, historians are agreed that the one Civil War which has occurred in the century and a half of our national existence, would have been avoided if our domestic quarrel had been submitted to the Supreme Court instead of having been left to the arbitrament of the sword.

The same basic arrangement which has preserved the unity of our States has safeguarded the unity of the Catholic Church. Without the supreme court of the papacy to appeal to, the Catholic Church would long ago have been torn into a thousand warring factions. One has but to observe the innumerable divisions which have rent the body of Protestantism, during the few centuries of its existence, to perceive the chaos and anarchy that would have developed during the nineteen hundred years of the Church's existence, if she were without the divinely-established tribunal of papal infallibility as a court of last appeal. The marvelous unity of the Church which has provoked the admiration of the world is the happy consequence of the work of her supreme and infallible court, which has been functioning with unbroken continuity for nineteen centuries.

#### *A Difference?*

The analogy between the function of the Supreme Court in the interpretation of the Constitution and that of the Pope in the interpretation of Holy Scripture can scarcely fail to make a profound appeal to every citizen of our country regardless of religious belief. A non-Catholic lawyer, to whom the writer pointed out this similarity, commented as follows: "Yes, indeed, the analogy is striking. But there is a difference worth noting. It is this: While recognizing that the decision of the Supreme Court is binding and without appeal, we do not admit it to be infallible. It may still be wrong. Whereas, you Catholics maintain that the decision of the Pope is not only binding, but is infallible. In that respect, the comparison limps."

Let me now address to my dear non-Catholic reader the words I then addressed to my legal friend: The difference you point out is true. But it is to be noted that the circumstance of making the decision of the Supreme Court final and

irrevocable demands in theory that it should be infallible. For its decision should not bind unless it be unvaryingly the voice of truth and justice. Otherwise there is the possibility of binding the parties under penalty of imprisonment to accept a false and unjust decision. The pronouncement has, therefore, all the practical consequences of infallibility. Strict logic would require that a decision that has all the sanctions of infallibility should actually be infallible.

Now it is to be admitted that while the Supreme Court has the sanctions for an infallible decision, it does not, nevertheless, really possess infallibility. Why? Simply because the founding fathers, who conferred its powers upon it, did not themselves possess infallibility and were not able, therefore, to give to the Supreme Court the actual inerrancy which its decisions, binding, final and without appeal, would logically require.

#### *Christ was Able to Give*

But Jesus Christ is the Founder of the Catholic Church and of the supreme tribunal of papal infallibility. In giving to that court the power of making its decisions binding and without appeal, He gave it that which the authoritativeness and the irrevocability of its decisions really demand—actual infallibility.

For unlike the founding fathers, He possessed infallibility and was able, therefore, to confer it upon the highest tribunal in His Church, yes, more than that. He was in duty bound to confer it, for otherwise He would be responsible for a court whose decision was binding in conscience upon all its members, and yet in that decision there would be the possibility of falsehood and injustice. "Upon reflection," said my legal friend, "I must admit that I can see no possibility of escape from the logic of that conclusion."

From the binding and irrevocable character of the decisions of the Pope speaking in his official capacity, infallibility follows, therefore, as a logical necessity.

Let us now see if the voice of reason is confirmed by the handwriting of history. Let us see if such inerrancy was, as a matter of historical fact, conferred by Christ upon Peter, the first pontiff of His Church.

#### *Christ Rewards Peter*

The scene occurs at Caesarea Philippi. Peter has just made his memorable profession of faith in Christ's divinity, saying: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." The Master rewarded Peter in the following words: "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven, and I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

This solemn promise to confer upon Peter the primacy among the Apostles and the authority to teach and rule the Church is couched in distinctly Aramaic phraseology, abounding in characteristic Jewish metaphors and idioms. When translated into English the passage loses some of its force. Thus the word "kepha" is used for both "Peter" and "rock" in the language used by our Lord. What Christ said to Peter then was: "Thou art Rock (kepha) and upon this rock (kepha) I will build My Church."

The expression "gates of hell" signifies the powers of death or evil. The conferring of keys is a common Jewish metaphor indicating the bestowal of authority. Down to the present day the key remains as the symbol of jurisdiction. When a distinguished visitor arrives in one of our large cities, the officials sometimes confer upon him a large key as the symbol of his authority to rule the city for the day. Translating the rich imagery and symbolism of the Aramaic language used by our Saviour into current English, Christ said in effect to Peter:

"You are the solid foundation upon which I will build My Church. I assure you that the powers of death and evil shall not prevail against it. I give you the authority to rule the Church, to bind and to loosen; to decide what is right and wrong, lawful and unlawful, and your decisions are ratified by God Himself."

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 16:17-19.

*Christ Pledges His Guidance*

On the memorable occasion of the Last Supper, Christ said to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren."<sup>1</sup> Here again the Saviour assures Peter that the powers of evil shall not prevail against him, and authorizes him to guide and strengthen his brethren in the faith.

After His Resurrection when Christ had secured from Peter the pledge of his love and loyalty, He said to him: "Feed My Lambs. . . Feed My Lambs. . . Feed My sheep."<sup>2</sup> In these words Our Lord authorizes Peter to feed with the nourishing food of truth not only the lay members of the fold, but the elders in the flock, the disciples and the Apostles as well.

The conferring of infallible teaching authority, centering in Peter the visible head of the Church, is likewise evident from the words Christ addressed to all the Apostles: "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold *I am with you* all days, even to the consummation of the world."<sup>3</sup>

The expression "I am with you" occurs altogether about ninety times in the Old and New Testaments, and always signifies that special divine assistance will be given to guarantee the success of the mission assigned. Christ is Truth. Where Christ is, error cannot co-exist. It is the definite assurance to the infant Church that in teaching mankind the religion of Christ, the Church will not lead the world astray by teaching falsehood. Christ says to the Apostles in effect: "I, the Eternal Truth, will abide with you, will speak and teach through you, and give you my unfailing guidance and assistance."

<sup>1</sup>Luke 22:31-32.

<sup>2</sup>St. John 21:15-17.

<sup>3</sup>St. Matt. 28:18-20.

*Christ Promises the Spirit of Truth*

In the same explicit way Christ promises to send the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, upon the Apostles: "And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever: The Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him; because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you. . . But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you."<sup>1</sup>

In these words Christ assures the infant Church of the abiding presence of the Spirit of Truth guiding her in her teaching mission. This assurance of the Church's unfailing fidelity to the teachings of her divine Founder is the evidence of what we call the infallibility of the Church as focused in her supreme head, the Pope, the successor of Peter.

Many other utterances of Christ guaranteeing His unfailing guidance to His Church and her leader in the divinely appointed task of teaching all nations might be cited. The ones already presented, however, are ample evidence to carry conviction to the open mind.

*How Bridge the Gap?*

A few questions now remain to be considered. First, a university professor once said to me after I had presented the above evidence: "Father, I grant that the scriptural evidence is abundantly sufficient to show that Christ guaranteed to Peter and his fellow Apostles a guidance that would safeguard them from error in their teaching. But isn't there quite a large gap from Peter to Pope Pius XI? What evidence is there that Pius XI enjoys in the twentieth century the immunity from error given to Peter in the first?"

Let me address to my dear non-Catholic reader the words I addressed to my professional friend: The mission which Christ gave to Peter and his fellow Apostles was that of teaching all nations and all mankind. It was to endure until the last soul shall be gathered into the arms of its Creator. But Peter and his associates were mortal men, destined to pass away with their generation while their mis-

<sup>1</sup>St. John 14:16-17, 26.



sion was to continue. The guidance of Christ was, therefore, to continue with their successors. This is clearly disclosed by the words of Christ: "Behold I am *with you all days even to the consummation of the world.*" Since the Apostles were not to live until the end of the world, Christ promised to be with them in the person of their successors unto the end of time.

The logic of this conclusion can be denied only by those who believe that Christ was interested in saving only the souls of those who lived in His day, and was totally indifferent about all posterity. This, no Christian would maintain. Therefore, Christ must have provided for the certain transmission of His teachings to mankind through all the centuries. This is possible only through a teaching authority that is divinely safeguarded from error. Therefore, Pius XI today, and all his successors will enjoy, the same infallible teaching authority which was conferred upon the first pope, Peter the fisherman.

#### *Is An Infallible Bible Sufficient?*

Second. A Protestant Bishop in a sermon against Papal Infallibility recently said: "For my part, I have an infallible Bible and this is the only infallibility that I require." While plausible at first view, such a statement cannot stand the test of scrutiny.

Let me address myself in the following kindly manner to this Bishop, as the representative of all who share such a view: Either, my dear friend, you are infallibly certain that your particular interpretation of the Bible is the correct one or you are not. If you maintain that you are infallibly certain, then you claim for yourself—and you cannot very well deny the same for every other reader of the Bible—a personal infallibility, which you deny only to the pope and which we claim only for him. According to this view each of the hundreds of millions of readers of the Bible becomes a pope, while the only one who is not a pope is the pope himself. You avoid admitting the infallibility of the pope by multiplying infallibility by the number of readers of the Bible.

If you do not claim to be infallibly certain that your interpretation of the whole Bible is correct, then of what value is it to have an infallible Bible without an infallible

interpreter? In either case, your statement crumbles. The plain fact is that *an infallible Bible without an infallible living interpreter is largely futile.* Infallibility never gets from the printed pages to the one place it is needed, the mind of the reader. The myriad divisions within Protestantism offer ample evidence of the truth of this statement.

#### *A Hybrid*

This fact is well stated by a non-Catholic writer, W. H. Mallock, in his *Is Life Worth Living?* "Any supernatural religion," he says, "that renounces its claim to this (infallibility), it is clear, can profess to be a semi-revelation only. It is a hybrid thing, partly natural and partly supernatural, and it thus practically has all the qualities of a religion that is wholly natural. In so far as it professes to be revealed, it of course professes to be infallible; but if the revealed part be in the first place hard to distinguish, and in the second place hard to understand; if it may mean many things, and many of these things contradictory, it might as well never have been made at all. To make it in any sense an infallible revelation, or in other words a revelation at all *to us*, we need a power to interpret the testament that shall have equal authority with that testament itself."

Indeed, the question might well be asked of those who deny the establishment by Christ of an infallible teaching authority to safeguard the unity of His Church: Do you not indict the intelligence of our divine Lord when you deny to Him the foresight shown by the founders of the Republic in providing for a supreme authority to interpret the constitution and thus safeguard the permanence of the Union? Is it reasonable to suppose that divine Omniscience would fail to provide as effectively for the preservation of the unity of the Church as the founders did for the unity of the Republic?

#### *Infringement and Intellectual Freedom*

Third. A last question remains. Is not the doctrine of papal infallibility an undue infringement upon the freedom of the intellect? Is not a Catholic hampered in his search for scientific truth by a blind degrading obedience to the arrogant claims of an infallible Church? Here a distinction is necessary. There is a legitimate freedom and an illegitimate

one. The first is the freedom of believing the truth. The second is the freedom of believing error, which is in reality an abuse of the mind and constitutes a form of intellectual anarchy.

No one has the right to believe error anymore than one has the right to do wrong. The freedom of believing that four plus four are twenty-seven is enjoyed only by the inmates of an insane asylum. There is an inalienable obligation binding every rational person to believe the truth. This is the only obligation which the doctrine of infallibility imposes. It is not a limitation of intellectual liberty but an augmentation of it. For the acceptance of truth always enlarges the domain of the intellect. "You shall know the truth," said Christ, "and the truth shall make you free."<sup>1</sup>

A Catholic does not give a blind degrading obedience to a fallible teacher who might ask him to accept without question any preposterous statement. The Church does not possess the authority to invent new doctrines, but only to interpret those divinely revealed. Thus the able and scholarly encyclicals of the last two pontiffs are not, strictly speaking, infallible, since they do not absolutely define a dogma of faith. When a dogma is defined for the universal Church, this does not mean that it is invented, but merely that an article of the faith always held implicitly is now set forth in explicit terms.

#### *Newman and Kinsman*

This doctrine does not restrain a Catholic from the free prosecution of scientific truth, nor prevent him from the acceptance of any fact clearly demonstrated by science. Truth can never contradict truth. Nor can one truth ever serve as an obstacle to the acceptance of other truth, but only as a stimulus. Infallibility, as Cardinal Newman points out, "is a supply for a need, and it does not go beyond the need. Its object is, and its effect also, not to enfeeble the freedom or vigor of human thought, but to resist and control its extravagances."<sup>2</sup>

While visiting with the writer in 1930, Dr. Frederick J. Kinsman, formerly Episcopal Bishop of Delaware, and

<sup>1</sup>St. John 8:32.

<sup>2</sup>Apologia, p. 253.

one of the greatest scholars in his church, repeated to an audience of University students what he had previously written in his *Salve Mater*<sup>1</sup>: "My attitude toward the Church is one of entire submission. 'Crucifixion of the intellect,' some object. I should call it 'resurrection,' but so long as I experience the fact, I shall not quarrel about the word. My chief consciousness as a Catholic is a new freedom. Cardinal Gibbons, in a little address to me, said that in spite of 'exterior hardships,' which he knew I must encounter, he hoped that I might enjoy 'interior sunshine.' That I think expresses what has been given."

What the compass is to the sailor tossed about in his frail bark by a tempestuous sea in the dark of night, infallibility is to the wayfarer searching for religious truth amidst the error that envelopes him as a mist on every side. It is his certain guide to the harbor of truth. It is the safeguard which a beneficent Father has provided for the unerring transmission of revealed truth to His children in all the centuries of time. Papal infallibility is, therefore, not only entirely reasonable, but it is an absolutely necessary safeguard for the transmission of truth, without the admixture of error, to all the generations of men.

<sup>1</sup>p. XIII.

#### Discussion Aids

Is the Pope inspired? Is the Pope incapable of sin? Have many Popes been holy men? Give some figures. Does the prerogative of infallibility depend on holiness of life? Distinguish between the office and the man. Is the Pope free from the possibility of error on scientific questions? political questions? as a private teacher (even in matters of faith and morals)? When, then, is the Pope infallible? Name the three necessary conditions of infallibility. Does the prerogative enable the Pope to invent new doctrines? Just what is his function in the matter of infallibility? Draw an analogy between infallibility and the decisions of the Supreme Court. Show where the analogy (like every other analogy) limps. As evidence of Christ's intentions as to Peter's headship study carefully and discuss (1) Christ's appointment of Peter as head (Matt. 16); (2) Christ's promise of guidance to

Peter (Luke 22:31-32); Christ's authorization of Peter (John 21:15-17). For Peter's infallible teaching power, examine Matthew 28:18-20. For the abiding power of the Holy Ghost examine John 14:16-17. Answer the objection that there is a gap between Peter and Pius XII. How do you answer the statement that the Bible is infallible and sufficient of itself? Why is an infallible teaching power eminently logical? Answer the charge that infallibility is an infringement on intellectual freedom. Quote Newman and Kinsman on infallibility.

**Practices:**

Join fervently in the prayers that are said at the foot of the altar after Mass, which are said for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Read carefully and meditate on the gospel story of Peter's great confession at Caesarea Philippi.

Pray often to St. Peter for the prosperity of the Church's teaching.

## Chapter XI

### THE CHURCH: THE INTERPRETER OF THE BIBLE

#### *Why the Bible Alone Is Not a Safe Guide in Religion*

"The Catholic Church is hostile to the Bible. In the past, she withheld it from the laity by forbidding its translation into the vernacular. By keeping the Bible in Latin, she confined it chiefly to the clergy. She did not want the common people to read it for fear they might begin to think for themselves and thus free themselves from the domination of the clergy. It was the Reformers who put the Bible in the hands of the people. Even today the Catholic Church discourages her members from reading the Bible for themselves, for fear that they might take their religion from the Scriptures instead of from the Church."

Such are some of the charges most frequently brought against the true Church by our non-Catholic friends. They were voiced with redoubled frequency during 1934, when Lutherans were celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German. Priding themselves on being Bible Christians, taking their religion directly from the Scriptures, they view with deep-seated disapproval the policy of a Church which, they allege, emphasizes its own authority and minimizes that of the written word of God. They wonder at the docility of Catholics who submit to an arrangement which centralizes practically all authority in an institution, and thus affords them little, if any, opportunity for direct examination of the teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Scriptures. Where is that independent reasoning, that thinking for oneself, which is characteristic of our American democracy and of which our citizens are so proud?

Let us ask our non-Catholic friends to investigate with



us the truth or falsity of these charges. We ask them not to assume these accusations to be true simply because they have been often made, but to examine with open minds the actual evidence. We are confident that their sense of fairness will prompt them to form a verdict in accordance not with unfounded rumors spread by enemies, but in accordance with the real facts in the case.

### *What Are the Facts?*

What now are the facts? Briefly these: Far from being hostile to the Bible, the Catholic Church is its true Mother. She determined which are the books of religion from the many writings circulated as inspired in the early Christian ages, assembled them all within the covers of a single book, shielded it from destruction by the hordes of barbarian invaders that poured into Europe, and translated it into many languages long before Protestantism saw the light of day. If she regarded the Bible as her enemy, she had plenty of opportunity to destroy it centuries before Protestantism came into existence.

The simple fact is the Catholic Church loves the Bible, reveres it as the inspired word of God, gives to it a loyalty and an intelligent obedience greater than any religious body in the world. She gives to it not merely a lip service, but a loyalty which withstood alike the pressure of Henry VIII and of Napoleon Bonaparte, the mightiest monarchs of their day, who sought to coerce the Church into sanctioning divorces forbidden by Holy Writ—a loyalty of which history knows no parallel.

It is simply amazing to discover how few of our non-Catholic friends have ever stopped to inquire: Where did we get our Bible? Who assembled its various parts? Who determined what books were inspired by God and which were not? Who vouches for it as the authoritative and inspired word of God? The answer to all these queries is: The Catholic Church. The chances are that if they stopped to inquire into the origin of the Bible, into the institution which framed its canon, and mothered it for eleven centuries before the first Protestant was born, they would not long remain protesters.

### *Origin of the Bible*

Many are heard to speak of the Bible as if they thought it were simply a single book. In reality it is a whole library, a vast collection of 73 different books, 46 belonging to the Old Testament and 27 to the New. These books were not written at the same time or in one era. From Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, to the Apocalypse of St. John, the last book of the New Testament, there stretches a period of approximately 1500 years. Thus if we were to stand by the bier of Moses, and read the Scriptures then in existence, we would be limited to the first five books of the Old Testament. Even the books of the New Testament did not appear at the same time, but at varying intervals over almost three quarters of a century. It was the Catholic Church who gathered up all these books, placed them within the covers of a single volume, and thus gave to the world what is known today as the Bible.

Did not the Church, however, discourage the reading of the Bible? The exact opposite is the truth. From the early centuries of the Christian era to the present day, the Church has persistently and tirelessly promoted the reading and study of the Bible by both clergy and laity. Quotations from the early Fathers to this effect could be presented almost without end. Thus, referring to the Bible, St. Jerome declares: "God gave it to you for you to read."<sup>1</sup> Long before this, St. Polycarp had said to the Philippians: "I trust that you are well read in Holy Scripture and that naught is hid from you."<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, writing in the second century, declares: "Look into God's revelations, examine our Sacred Books, for we do not keep them in hiding."<sup>3</sup>

Great emphasis was placed upon the public reading of the Scriptures in church during the early centuries. Thus, St. Irenaeus takes it for granted that every earnest man "diligently reads the Scriptures in company with the priests in the church with whom lies apostolic doctrine."<sup>4</sup> That the custom of reading the Scriptures in church was widespread

<sup>1</sup>On Isaias, 22:6.

<sup>2</sup>Ad Philipp, XII.

<sup>3</sup>Apol. XXXI.

<sup>4</sup>Adv. Haer.

is evident from repeated references to the practice in Conciliar declarations and in the writings of the Fathers.

### *Bible in Middle Ages*

Was not the Bible practically unknown, however, in the Middle Ages when the Church was dominant? Luther's widely quoted statement that before his time "the Bible lay under the bench forgotten in the dust" has contributed to the spreading of this impression among people who take their history from one book, without making any effort to discover the views of contemporary writers. The simple fact is that Luther's assertion is contradicted by the facts as reported by non-Catholic historians without number. Thus the German historian, Michael, after a lifetime of painstaking research, concludes that the Bible was "the most widely circulated book in the Middle Ages, and had a great influence on the life of the nations."<sup>1</sup> Kropatscheck flatly contradicts Luther's assertion. "It is no longer possible to hold," he declares, "as the old polemics did, that the Bible was a sealed book to both theologians and laity. The more we study the Middle Ages, the more does this fable tend to dissolve into thin air."<sup>2</sup> Rev. S. R. Maitland, librarian to the Archbishop of Canterbury, conducted extensive research into the state of religion from the ninth to the thirteenth century in England and published his results in London in 1844. He acknowledges that to his surprise he found no single instance in which the Bible was treated with disrespect, no single instance in which it had been kept from the people.<sup>3</sup>

"There is," writes Dr. Cutts, "a good deal of popular misapprehension about the way in which the Bible was regarded in the Middle Ages. Some people think that it was very little read, even by the clergy; whereas the fact is that the sermons of the medieval preachers are more full of Scriptural quotations and allusions than any sermons in these days; and the writers on other subjects are so full of Scriptural allusion; that it is evident their minds were saturated with Scriptural diction."<sup>4</sup>

Living at a time when the printing press was not yet

<sup>1</sup>Geschichte der Deutschen Volkes, III, 228.

<sup>2</sup>Das Schrift-princip der Luth. Kirche, 168.

<sup>3</sup>The Dark Ages, London, 1844.

<sup>4</sup>Turning Points of English History, 200.

invented and when manuscripts were rare and costly, the laity learned much Scripture by listening to sermons, and by studying the sculpture, paintings, frescoes and mosaics which filled their churches. What a panoramic view of both the Old and the New Testament could be had by a parishioner of St. Mark's in Venice in the thirteenth century can be glimpsed by the visitor there today. The writer spent several days in studying the portrayal of the events, characters, parables, teachings of the Scriptures, depicted in the mosaics, sculptures and paintings with which this venerable old Cathedral abounds, and came away far from exhausting the treasure trove. As Ruskin points out: "The walls of the Church became the poor man's Bible, and a picture was more easily read than a chapter."<sup>1</sup>

### *Luther, First Translator?*

Was not Luther, however, the first to translate the Bible into the vernacular? No. Luther's translation of the New Testament was not published until 1522 and his version of the Old Testament did not appear until 1534. From 1466 to 1522, Catholics had already published 14 complete editions of the Bible in High German at Augsburg, Basle, Strassburg and Nuremberg, and five in Low German at Cologne, Delf, Halberstadt and Lubeck.<sup>2</sup> During the period of seventy years, from 1450 to 1520, Catholics had published 156 Latin and six Hebrew editions of the Bible, besides issuing complete translations in French (10), Italian (11), Bohemian (2), Flemish (1), Limousine (1), and Russian (1).<sup>3</sup>

At the Congressional Library at Washington, there is on exhibition a copy of the "Mazarin Bible," printed by Gutenberg, the inventor of the printing press, thirty years before Luther was born. There is likewise at the University of Notre Dame a copy of the Bible, printed in German in 1483, the very year of Luther's birth. It is true that Catholics objected to Luther's translation, but only because it was faulty and unreliable. As Emser wrote at the time: "He has in many places confused, stultified and perverted the old trustworthy text of the Christian Church to its great disadvantage, and also poisoned it with heretical glosses and pre-

<sup>1</sup>The Stones of Venice, II, 99.

<sup>2</sup>Janssen, History of the German People, XIV, 388.

<sup>3</sup>Falk, Die Bibel Am Ausgange des Mittelalters.

faces. . . He almost everywhere forces the Scriptures on the question of faith and works, even when neither faith nor works are thought of."<sup>1</sup> Emsler pointed out as many as 1,400 inaccuracies, while Bunsen, a Protestant scholar, tabulated 3,000.

#### *Chained Bibles?*

Is it not true, however, that the monks of the Middle Ages chained the Bibles in their libraries and churches to keep them from being circulated among the common people? This is another widespread misrepresentation, calculated to discredit the Church's fostering care of the Bible. The Bible was chained in various Churches, but not for the purpose mentioned, but for the very opposite; to prevent theft, and thus render it accessible to the greatest number possible. A telephone directory is usually chained in a public booth, but not to keep it from the people, but to keep it for the people. So, likewise with the chained Bible.

The first mention of chained Bibles is found in the catalogue of St. Peter's Monastery of Weissenburg, Alsace, in 1040, which refers to four Psalters chained in the monastery church. Throughout the Middle Ages it was considered a pious work to bequeath Bibles and Psalters to be chained in church for common use. The Reformers followed the custom of having chained Bibles in their churches, and the practice continued for more than three centuries.

Is it not a fact, however, that the Catholic Church today discourages her members from reading the Bible for themselves? On the contrary, she encourages them to read the Bible frequently, even daily. Leo XIII, in his Encyclical on the Bible, declares: "The solicitude of the Apostolic Office naturally urges, and even compels us, not only to desire that this great source of Catholic revelation should be made safely and abundantly accessible to the flock of Jesus Christ, but also not to suffer any attempt to defile or corrupt it."

Pope Benedict XV, in his Encyclical on St. Jerome, addresses to all Catholics the words which St. Jerome wrote to Demetrius: "Love the Bible and wisdom will love you; love it and it will preserve you; honor it and it will embrace you." The Pontiff adds: "No one can fail to see what profit and

sweet tranquility must result in well disposed souls from a devout reading of the Bible. Whoever comes to it in piety, faith and humility, and with a determination to make progress in it, will assuredly find therein and will eat 'the Bread that cometh down from Heaven.'" Even to this day the Church requires all her clergy, busy as they are with varied duties, to spend approximately one hour in the daily recitation of the Divine Office. About three fourths of this is Scripture, and the rest is chiefly commentaries by the early Fathers upon the Gospels.

#### *A Vicious Circle?*

Are not Catholics, however, guilty of reasoning in a circle when they prove the Church by the Bible, and then turn right around and prove the Bible by the Church? This is a widespread impression among our Protestant neighbors. No less a writer than Dr. Douglas C. Macintosh of Yale Divinity School trots out this old charge anew. It is traceable to a failure to understand the Church's real teaching in the matter. If the Church began by proclaiming the Scriptures to be inspired and then proved herself from the inspired Scriptures, she would indeed be guilty of the fallacy of the vicious circle. The Church does not begin, however, by presupposing that the books of the New Testament are in any way inspired.

She goes to them just as she would to any historical document. She examines them carefully, scrutinizes them in the light of contemporary evidence from other sources, and finds them as a result of proper corroboration to be authentic historical documents. She allows the words of Christ and His Apostles as recorded in the Scriptures to tell their own story of the foundation of a Church and its authorization to teach in the name of Christ Himself. Now this document, whose authenticity and historicity have been proved by the same methods which would be used in the case of any secular document, is found to declare that the Church which Christ established is not only empowered to teach the faithful the truths of religion but is promised by Christ the unfailing assistance of the Holy Spirit in safeguarding it from error and falsehood in the discharge of its divinely appointed teaching mission.

The Church then proceeds to declare by virtue of the

<sup>1</sup>Janassen, *History of the German People*, XIV, 425.



teaching authority conferred upon her by Christ, as recorded in the historical document, called the New Testament, that the latter is inspired. Up until that last moment the Scriptures were appealed to simply as a historical document. It is only now, after the teaching authority of the Church has been established by the historical words of Christ that she terms the Scriptures inspired. Hence it will be seen that at all stages of the journey the procedure of the Church is rigorously logical. Thus the authority of both the Church and the Bible depends ultimately upon the divine Founder of the Christian religion, Jesus Christ.

#### *The Church's Charter*

The Bible may be said to be the Church's charter, her fundamental bill of rights. "For," as Father Hugh Pope, O. P., of Oxford has pointed out, "if you question the Church's claims, she refers you to the Bible as an historical fact—not as historically true, for that is a wholly different matter. If you tell the Church that you find it hard to accept the Bible as historically true, she will tell you to settle that question for yourself. But, she will add, once you accept the Bible—at any rate in its main features—once you accept the 'fact' of Prophecy and its culmination in Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, who claimed to be, and proved Himself to be, the Son of God, made man for our salvation, then you must also accept me as His divinely appointed means for preserving and interpreting His teaching for the world to the end of time, as being 'the body of Christ, the pillar and the ground of truth.'"

Father Hugh Pope likewise points out that, "if you quarrel with the Church's teaching, she will refer you to the Bible as its guarantee. But if you protest that you cannot discover there all the doctrines which she sets forth, the Church will not send you to the Bible for these doctrines—though for some of them she could do so if she liked; she will send you indeed to the Bible, not to discover there the particular doctrines in question, but the fundamental doctrine of the Church's authority to teach at all. And if you prove obstinate and urge that you, or competent scholars, have as much right as any theologians of the Church to discover what really are the teachings of the Bible, the Church will gently remind you that the theologians are not the Church but the

Church's children; that when they, for example, teach the doctrine of Christ's Resurrection in the very same flesh in which He 'walked on earth,' they do not do so simply because they think it is true or in accordance with the Scripture, but because they are the children of that Church which was actually present at, and witnessed those scenes, and has handed them down through the subsequent ages."<sup>1</sup>

#### *A Safe Guide?*

Is not the Bible alone, however, a safe guide in matters of religious faith? "Where the Bible speaks, we speak, and where the Bible is silent, we are silent," is the motto frequently quoted by Protestants in support of their claim that the Bible alone is a sufficient rule of faith. Let us ask our non-Catholic friends to examine this rule of faith to see if it would give them the safety and sureness they have a right to expect in religious faith. A competent guide for the Christian religion should possess these three qualifications: (1) It must be within the reach of every inquirer after truth. (2) It must be clear and intelligible to all. (3) It must present all the truths of the Christian religion. Now the Bible alone possesses none of these.

First, the Scriptures were not accessible to the *primitive Christians*, for the simple reason that they were not all written until many years after the establishment of Christianity. Thus St. Luke did not write his Gospel until about twenty years after the death of Christ. St. John's Gospel did not appear until toward the close of the first century. For many years after the Epistles were written the knowledge of them was largely confined to the particular churches or groups of converts to whom they were addressed. It was not until the Council of Hippo in 393 that the Church gathered these gospels and epistles, scattered about in different churches, and placed them within the covers of a single book, giving the Bible to the world. During the first four centuries, the golden age of the Christian religion, when many of its most perfect members lived and died, the Bible was not yet extant as a guide for their religious faith.

The printing press was not invented until about 1440. Hence from the *fourth to the fifteenth century* it was physically impossible to provide each member with a copy of the

<sup>1</sup>The Catholic Church and the Bible, 80.

Bible. Even at the present time, as in all previous ages and climes, there are millions who are unable to read, millions to whom the Bible remains a sealed book.

*Clear to All?*

Secondly the Bible is not a clear and intelligible guide to all. There are many passages in the Bible which are difficult and obscure, not only to the ordinary person but to the highly trained scholar as well. St. Peter himself tells us that in the Epistles of St. Paul there are "certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and the unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, he tells us elsewhere "that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation."<sup>2</sup>

St. Luke narrates in the Acts of the Apostles that a certain man was riding in his chariot, reading the Book of Isaias. Upon being asked by St. Philip whether he understood the meaning of the prophecy, he replied: "How can I understand unless some man show me?" In these modest words is reflected the experience of practically all readers of the Bible. True, in the first years of his separation from the Church, Luther declared that the Bible could be interpreted by every one, "even by the humble miller's maid, nay by a child of nine." Later on, however, when the Anabaptists, the Zwinglians and others contradicted his views, the Bible became "a heresy book," most obscure and difficult to understand. He lived to see numerous heretical sects rise up and spread through Christendom, all claiming to be based upon the Bible.

Thus, in 1525 he sadly deplored the religious anarchy to which his own principle of the private interpretation of Scripture had given rise: "There are as many sects and beliefs as there are heads. This fellow will have nothing to do with Baptism; another denies the Sacrament; a third believes that there is another world between this and the Last Day. Some teach that Christ is not God; some say this, some that. There is no rustic so rude but that, if he dreams or fancies anything, it must be the whisper of the Holy Ghost, and he himself a prophet."<sup>3</sup> The hundreds of sects, with their

<sup>1</sup>II, Peter, III, 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. I, 20.

<sup>3</sup>Greiser, Luther, IV. 183-497.

divisions and subdivisions, which the Religious Census of the United States Government lists in our own country, offer grim evidence of the ceaseless dissension and havoc which the principle of the private interpretation of Scripture has wrought in our own day.

*Does Not Contain All Teachings*

Thirdly, the Bible does not contain *all* the teachings of the Christian religion, nor does it formulate all the duties of its members. Take, for example, the matter of Sunday observance, the attendance at divine services and the abstention from unnecessary servile work on that day, a matter upon which our Protestant neighbors have for many years laid great emphasis. Let me address myself in a friendly spirit to my dear Protestant reader: You believe that the Bible alone is a safe guide in religious matters. You also believe that one of the fundamental duties enjoined upon you by your Christian faith is that of Sunday observance. But where does the Bible speak of such an obligation? I have read the Bible from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelations, and have found no reference to the duty of sanctifying the Sunday. The day mentioned in the Bible is not the Sunday, the first day of the week, but the Saturday, the last day of the week. It was the Apostolic Church which, acting by virtue of that authority conferred upon her by Christ, changed the observance to the Sunday in honor of the day on which Christ rose from the dead, and to signify that now we are no longer under the Old Law of the Jews, but under the New Law of Christ. In observing the Sunday as you do, is it not apparent that you are really acknowledging the insufficiency of the Bible alone as a rule of faith and religious conduct, and proclaiming the need of a divinely established teaching authority which in theory you deny?

There are certain truths which Christ and the Apostles taught which are not recorded in the Scriptures, but which are embodied in the life, practice and ministry of the Church, in her written and unwritten traditions, which supplement the Biblical record. In other words, the Church in her worship and religious and moral observances, was a *going concern* before a word of the New Testament was written. She is not dependent on it for her existence, nor is she limited in her doctrines to it. St. John ends his Gospel by telling us that

"there are also many others things which Jesus did which are not written in this book." St. Paul emphasizes the importance of holding fast to the teachings transmitted not only by writing but also by word of mouth. "Therefore, brethren," he exhorts, "stand fast; and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle."<sup>1</sup> From all of which it must be abundantly clear that the Bible alone is not a safe and competent guide because it is not now and has never been accessible to all, because it is not clear and intelligible to all, and because it does not contain all the truths of the Christian religion.

#### *Demands Living Interpreter*

The simple fact is that the Bible, like all dead letters, calls for a living interpreter. The founding fathers of our Republic did not leave the Constitution to be interpreted by every individual according to his whims. That would have spelled speedy destruction to the unity of the infant Republic. They wisely constituted the Supreme Court to be the living, authoritative interpreter of the Constitution. When Victor Berger, a Congressman from Milwaukee, was arrested and brought into court, charged with treasonable utterances during the World War, he pleaded his constitutional right of freedom of speech. "But," said the Court in effect, "you are not the authorized interpreter of that document. The Supreme Court has decreed that that passage of the Constitution may never be so construed as to countenance treason to the government. Freedom of speech is always limited by the duty to refrain from inciting citizens to rebellion against the government."

Just as the Supreme Court is the authorized living interpreter of the Constitution, so the Catholic Church is the living authoritative interpreter of the Bible. She has been the preserver and custodian of the Bible through the centuries, and she interprets it for us in the name and with the authority of Jesus Christ. Christ never wrote a word, never commanded his Apostles or disciples to write. He taught and commissioned His Apostles to teach and assured them of His abiding presence with them. His commission to them is as clear cut as it is impressive. "All power is given to me," said

He, "In heaven and on earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."<sup>1</sup>

That the Apostles understood that their mission was to preach the truths of Christ to all the world, and to ordain successors to carry on this work to the end of time, is evident from the words of St. Paul: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard. And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they be sent? . . . Faith then cometh by hearing. . . But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world."<sup>2</sup>

#### *An Outstretched Hand*

The Census on Religious Denominations, gathered in 1926 under the auspices of the United States Government, shows that there are about 60,000,000 of our fellow citizens unaffiliated with any form of the Christian faith. Must it not be evident to the thoughtful reader of these lines, whether he be Protestant or Catholic, that the estrangement of such a vast majority of our countrymen is traceable in large measure to the division, dissension and anarchy which the principle of making each individual supreme and a Court of Last Appeal in the interpretation of Scripture, has brought into the world? Scandalized at the spectacle of several hundred warring sects, all disagreeing among themselves as to the meaning of various passages in the Bible, millions of people begin to wonder if any of them has retained all the truths of Christ and can minister to them in the name and with the authority of Christ. To try to find the true Church among the several hundred sects all claiming to be the Church of Christ, they feel, is like trying to find a needle in a hay stack. This feeling of futility breeds indifference to all forms of organized Christianity.

In sharp contrast with the sorry spectacle of Protes-

<sup>1</sup>II Thess. II., 14.

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 28:18.

<sup>2</sup>Rom. X., 14-18.



tantism with its hundreds of warring sects and creeds, agreeing with one another only in their disagreement with all others, there is the Catholic Church with its 431,000,000 members—more than twice the total of all the sects of Protestantism combined—speaking every tongue and in every land under the heavens, all united in the strong bonds of a common faith. It offers the greatest spectacle of religious unity which the world affords. To what is this unity due? Aside from that grace and protection from on High which has never failed her, it is due chiefly to the fact that all its members recognize the Church as the authorized living interpreter of Scripture, founded by Christ to teach the world all the truths which Christ commanded, in the name and with the authority of her divine Founder, Jesus Christ Himself.

May we not invite our fellow countrymen of other faiths to return to the holy Catholic Apostolic Church, the historic center of unity, and the Mother from whom they have strayed, to aid us in stemming the forces of indifferentism and irreligion in America today? It is only thus that we who call ourselves Christians and claim to be followers of the crucified Christ will fulfill the plea which St. Paul wrote from his prison at Rome to his little band of converts at Ephesus and through them to the Christians of all succeeding ages: "I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you. . . to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Eph. 4: 1-5.

### Discussion Aids

Why is the Church rightly called the mother of the Bible? How many books are contained in the Old Testament? In the New Testament? Were they all written at the same time? Discuss. Were Catholics in the early Church encouraged to read the Scriptures? What evidence have we that Bible reading was encouraged in the Middle Ages? When did Luther's translation of the New Testament into the vernacular appear? His translation of the Old Testament? How many translations of the Bible into the German vernacular had been made before Luther's translation? Into what other

languages had the Bible been translated by 1520? Why do Catholics object to Luther's translation? Explain "chained Bibles". Explain the charge of "vicious circle" reasoning. Explain in what way the Bible may be called the Church's charter. Point out the weakness in the claim that the Bible is the sole rule of Faith. Discuss fully according to the three qualifications: 1. availability to all; 2. clearness to all; 3. as containing all teaching of Christian religion. Explain fully why the Bible must have a living interpreter.

### Practices:

Adopt the habit of reading daily one chapter of the Scriptures.

Learn to know Christ first hand by a careful reading of the New Testament.

Know that Pope Leo XIII granted the faithful an indulgence for reading the Scriptures fifteen minutes a day.

### Part III

## THE SACRAMENTS

### Channels of Divine Grace

## Chapter XII

### THE SACRAMENTS: CHANNELS OF DIVINE GRACE

#### *How Christ Applies Fruits of Redemption to Human Souls*

When Christ came upon earth to redeem mankind He taught men directly, and personally extended to them blessings and graces for both soul and body. But how were the fruits of the Redemption to reach the countless generations as yet unborn? To solve this problem Christ founded a Church, which He commissioned to transmit His doctrines to all ages. He likewise established the sacraments which serve as so many channels through which the graces and blessings of the Redemption reach the soul of each individual recipient. The administration of the sacraments was entrusted to the Church to which Christ gave complete jurisdiction over the deposit of divine truth and over the means of sanctification. In a very true sense the Church may be said to be the extension of the Incarnation and the application of its fruits to the needs of individual human souls. "Let a man so account of us," said St. Paul, "as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."<sup>1</sup>

Like her divine Founder, the Church has a twofold nature, human and divine, visible and invisible. We, too, are not disembodied spirits but are a composite of the physical and the spiritual. The senses are the gateways to the soul. Naturally we expect the life of the Church to reflect our twofold nature and to minister to the invisible spiritual element through the agency of the visible and physical. This is precisely what the Church does for us through her sacramental system. A sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace. Far from being a mere meaningless ritual it is a beautiful manifestation, a clear signifying in an external manner of a grace which God confers upon the soul.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 4:1.

*An Analogy*

The sacraments and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass are the chief channels through which the fruits of the Redemption, the blessings and graces of God, are applied to individual souls. If one travels out in the western part of our country, such as Southern California, where irrigation is extensively employed for the cultivation of orange groves, he will see how necessary it is to have not only a vast reservoir of water but also canals to carry the life-giving water to each tree. No matter how vast a quantity of water is contained in the reservoir, if there be no canals to carry the water to the roots of each tree, the latter will soon die. Christ by His suffering and death gained vast spiritual riches for us. They may be said to constitute a huge spiritual reservoir. It is necessary that some means be devised to tap the reservoir and carry its riches to our souls. The sacraments are such means—the channels of divine grace to the souls of men.

Three elements are necessary to constitute a sacrament. It must be (1) an outward sign, (2) instituted by Christ, (3) to give grace. Thus in baptism, the outward sign is the washing with water by pouring, sprinkling or immersing, accompanied by the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." This indicates in an external manner the internal cleansing of the soul from original and actual sin. Secondly, it was instituted by Christ who gave to His Church the commission to go into the whole world to teach and to baptize in the name of the Blessed Trinity. Thirdly, baptism produces sanctifying grace in the soul, cleansing it from sin, and making the person henceforth a child of God and an heir of heaven.<sup>1</sup> The Church could not institute a sacrament, for only Christ can give grace.

While Christ instituted the seven sacraments, He did not determine, save in a most general way, the matter and form of certain sacraments, such as Confirmation, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction. He permitted the Church to determine them with precision. Thus the sacraments of the Greek Orthodox Church are entirely valid, although they use a different form of Confirmation, employ the deprecatory form

<sup>1</sup>John 8:12.

of absolution, and say, "May this same God through me a sinner forgive you all, both now and forever," while we in the Western Church use the declarative form: "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." In conferring Holy Orders our Bishops place both hands upon the person to be ordained, while in the Greek Orthodox Church the Bishop places his right hand only. These slight differences of form do not affect the substance of the sacraments nor, therefore, their validity.

*A Point of Departure*

As will be shown in detail when explaining each Sacrament, the Scriptures refer to all of them but do not present a developed theology of the sacraments. This was left to the Church to work out in succeeding ages. Here we come to a point of far-reaching difference between the Catholic and the Protestant conception of the source and rule of faith. The Protestant who expects to find in the Bible his entire religious faith with all its formulations and developments will look in vain for the theology of the sacraments.

A Catholic, however, accepts not only the Bible but also the written and unwritten traditions of the Apostolic era, the active ministry of the Apostles and their successors as reflected in the manner of worship, life, and practices of the Church founded by Christ, propagated by the Apostles, and safeguarded by the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth. There are many truths presented only in germinal form in the Scriptures. It is by virtue of the authority conferred by Christ upon His Church to preach and to teach in His name, that she draws out in explicit form and unfolds in greater detail the implications of doctrines contained only in germinal form in the Bible.

*Development of Doctrine*

Thus there is, as Cardinal Newman has pointed out, a development of doctrine within the Church. It is not an evolution, in the sense that it advances from one species of doctrine to an altogether different one. It is, as St. Vincent of Lerins indicated in the fifth century, more like the growth and development that occurs in a human being. His personal identity remains, but he advances in the maturity of his thought and in the deeper comprehension of many things



which were previously but dimly discerned. Such a development of doctrine has occurred in the case of the sacraments.

Thus the terms *matter* and *form* were not applied to the sacraments until the thirteenth century, although the idea conveyed by these words is found in holy Scripture and in the writings of St. Augustine in the fourth century. These philosophical terms were borrowed from Aristotle, and their use was sanctioned by the Councils of Constance in 1414, Florence in 1439, and Trent in 1547.

They do not imply, however, as some non-Catholics imagine, that the sacraments are material corporeal things. "What they mean is that just as bodies are composed of two constituents, the one indeterminate and the other determining, so too in the sacraments two elements, the one indeterminate and the other determining, can be distinguished; and these may rightly be called 'matter' and 'form.'"<sup>1</sup> Thus in baptism, the washing with water is the matter, while the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," which signify why the water is being used and what it symbolizes, are the form.

#### *Empty Signs?*

The Reformers not only reduced the number of the sacraments but also denied their objective efficacy. Thus, Luther characterized the sacraments as "mere tokens of the divine promise that sins were to be forgiven by faith." Calvin referred to them as "mere messengers announcing to men God's deeds of kindness," while Zwingli styled them "mere signs of Christian profession." The erroneous views of the Reformers led naturally and logically to their denial of the objective efficacy of the sacraments. If justification is effected not by good works but by faith alone, and if justification consists in a merely extrinsic application of the merits of Christ without effecting any interior change in the soul, then the sacraments have no other purpose than simply to stimulate faith, and are really not channels of divine grace to human souls. They become "mere tokens," empty signs, not effective channels of grace. This view of the Reformers represented a radical departure from the faith of the uni-

<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm-Scaenell, *Manual of Theology*, II, 361.

versal Christian Church from the days of Christ down to their own time.

What is the evidence, however, that there are seven sacraments? Do not most Protestant denominations hold there are but two sacraments, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper? The fact is that Luther was the first to break with the traditional teaching of the Christian Church when he reduced the number to three, baptism, penance and the Lord's Supper. Later on under the influence of Calvin, he reduced the number to two, ruling out penance.<sup>1</sup>

While mentioning all the sacraments more or less explicitly, the New Testament never presents a list of them such as one would find in a manual of systematic theology. From the days of the Apostles, the Church made use of these means of grace and sanctification, though she did not at once make an inventory of them. The early Fathers mention all of the seven sacraments in the course of their instructions to the catechumens and the faithful, but without presenting any systematic treatment of the precise meaning of a sacrament.

#### *Belief of Greeks*

A further striking confirmation of the widespread character of this belief in the early Church is found in the fact that it has been the unbroken faith of the Greek Orthodox Church down to the present day. Thus in 1576, Jeremias, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, indignantly spurned the invitation of the Lutherans of Wittenberg to unite with them, because of their heretical denial of the seven sacraments. The Synod of Constantinople in 1638 excommunicated Lukaris of Constantinople for his Lutheran doctrine of two sacraments, and declared that Christ had instituted seven sacraments.

The simple fact is that while the sacraments were established by Christ, their theology has been worked out by the Church. "After all," points out Abbe Broglie, "the doctrine has been the same during all ages, because all our sacramental rites have always been used with faith in their efficacy. But the systematic and philosophic form has progressed. The proposition that there are seven Sacraments of the New Law, which alone produce grace, now a dogma of faith.

<sup>1</sup>Grisez, *Luther* II, 27.

could not have appeared evident in the eleventh century on account of a lack of precision in language. The Church advances in her knowledge of the truth; she advances slowly and prudently, but yet she does advance; each century adds more precision, more completeness in her knowledge. The condition of this progress is the assistance of the Holy Ghost, directing human thought, and repressing its errors."<sup>1</sup>

*"Smack of Magic"*

Now let us take up the charge that the sacraments smack of magic. We call that magic when an inadequate and insufficient cause is expected to produce a higher effect; when that which is material is expected to produce a spiritual or divine effect. Thus if a person were to take a rock and rub it against a carpet and expect it to make the carpet speak, that would be magic. Nothing remotely resembling such a notion is implied in the nature of the sacraments. Their efficacy does not depend upon the person who administers them nor upon any humanly devised formulas which coerce God to act in a certain manner. They depend solely upon Jesus Christ who established them as channels through which His grace flows unto us.

Thus St. Augustine says: "Baptism does not depend on the merits of those by whom it is administered, nor in the merits of those to whom it is administered, but in its own sanctity and truth, *on account of Him by whom it has been instituted.*" What the saintly Bishop of Hippo says of the source whence baptism derives its efficacy is true likewise of all the other sacraments.

"In the sacraments," as Father Hugh Pope, O. P., points out, "the *effective cause* is the Passion of Christ, the instrumental causes are the matter and form, or the outward signs used in the sacraments themselves as applied by properly constituted ministers whom Christ employs for the making of the sacraments and their distribution to the people."<sup>2</sup> The effects do not transcend their cause. For Christ our Redeemer is the source from which the graces flow to us through the sacraments as channels. Those who make the charge of magic completely misunderstand the Catholic doc-

<sup>1</sup>Conferences sur la Vie Surnaturelle, 307.

<sup>2</sup>Six Sacraments, 24.

trine concerning sacraments. They fail likewise to understand that the Catholic Church condemns magic as a grievous sin, a superstition which reason and common sense as well as religion condemn.

Is it not evident then to every fair-minded person, regardless of religious faith, that the sacraments have absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with magic? What then must we say of those individuals who recklessly slander more than four hundred and thirty million Catholics throughout the world, by attributing to them a belief in magic, when as a matter of fact they expressly repudiate it in all its forms and actually condemn it as a mortal sin? We leave it to almighty God, the just Judge, who alone knows whether they are malicious or are simply the victims of misinformation and misguidance, to pronounce sentences upon them.

*Borrowed From Pagan Cults?*

The charge that the sacramental system and other practices of primitive Christianity were borrowed from pagan cults has been ably refuted by such non-Catholics as Anrich, Cumont, Kenedy, Jones and Schweitzer, and by such Catholic scholars as Lagrange, Jacquier, Mangenot, Prat and Venard. The pet fallacy of certain students of comparative religion who appear anxious to show that Christianity is largely a development from various pagan cults is to jump from a few vague similarities to the conclusion that there has been a genetic or blood relationship. "All practices suggested by the religious instinct have a certain analogy between them," as Father Prat points out, "but it would be an unpardonable fallacy to transform these similitudes into proofs of interdependence."<sup>1</sup>

The simple fact is that the early Christians manifested a detestation and horror of the idolatry and superstitious practices of the pagans. They not only refused to participate in their worship but permitted themselves to be martyred rather than to cast a few grains of incense on the fire before their pagan idols. Anything which smacked of the idolatry, magic and superstition of the pagans was something which the Christians avoided even at the cost of life itself.

Enough has been said to show that the sacraments are

<sup>1</sup>Theology of St. Paul, II, 394.

not mere meaningless ritual, but are beautiful signs which signify in an external manner the effect produced in the soul, and are thus aids to intelligent devotion. They are the great channels through which the grace of God flows to humanity and is applied to the soul of the individual recipient.

Through her divinely established sacramental system the Church is enabled to minister effectively to the spiritual needs of man all the way from the cradle to the grave. She comes to him at all the great crises in his life with sacraments designed to strengthen him with the particular grace needed to cope successfully with every emergency. Thus shortly after the individual is born, the Church brings him as a tender babe to the baptismal font, and pours over his brow the cleansing waters of baptism, washing away the stain of original sin and making him a child of God and an heir of heaven. Then when the budding petals of reason unfold, how carefully she prepares the child for his first Holy Communion. With the Bread of Angels she nourishes and strengthens his spiritual life. With the sacrament of Confirmation she invigorates him and makes him a valiant soldier in the army of Christ, ready to do and die.

When the tempests of youthful passion have left him fallen and bruised amidst the thorns of life's highway, how tenderly she lifts him up and leads him to the tribunal of forgiveness where she breathes into his ear the words of pardon and of courage to rise and try again. When he stands at the dawn of young manhood with the new emotion of conjugal love seeking to find expression in a union that will last until death, the Church brings him and his bride before God's altar and unites them in the indissoluble bond of Christian marriage. Then when life's fitful fever is over, and God sends His angels to lower upon his eyes "the curtain of death," how valiantly the priest stands at his bedside to strengthen him with the last anointing and to fortify him for his long journey into eternity with the Holy Viaticum of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Thus does the Church stand at the side of her children at all the great crises and turning points in their lives with a sacrament specially instituted by Christ to supply the particular grace and strength needed to win the victory.

### Discussion Aids

Discuss fully the nature of the sacraments. Illustrate. What three things are necessary? Discuss. Did Christ institute all the sacraments? Did He indicate the matter and form of all of them? Who has the right to define the matter and form of the sacraments where these are not indicated by Christ? Does the Bible give a developed theology of the sacraments? Explain how the Church has the right to develop this theology. Explain what is meant by "development of doctrine." What treatment was given the sacraments by the Reformers? Does the Bible name seven sacraments? How do we know that there are seven? Refute the charge that the sacraments smack of magic. (Have a theologian explain the meaning of the Latin *ex opere operato* in connection with the sacraments.) How do you explain any similarity between pagan cults and Christian worship. Summarize the teaching of the Church on the sacraments.

### Practices:

Receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist with ever-increasing devotion, rereading this Chapter from time to time as a preparation.

Visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament often, in reparation for the work of the Reformers.

Be able to explain the nature of all the sacraments to a non-Catholic.



## Chapter XIII

### BAPTISM

Christ instituted baptism and commissioned the Apostles to baptize. "Going, therefore", said Christ to the Apostles, "teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> Similar is the testimony of St. Mark: "And he said to them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be condemned."<sup>2</sup> In obedience to this command, the Apostles and disciples went out into the countries of the then known world, preaching the gospel and baptizing. Thus on Pentecost, the very day the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire, St. Peter preached to a vast multitude and baptized them in the faith of Christ. "They therefore that received his word, were baptized," St. Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles, "and there were added in that day about three thousand souls."<sup>3</sup>

Baptism washes away the stain of original sin, and also any actual sins that may be present, makes the person a child of God and an heir to heaven. Original sin is the shadow or state of sin in which we are born as a result of the transgression of our first parent. "Wherefore," says St. Paul, "as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed unto all men, in whom all have sinned."<sup>4</sup> Through a singular miracle of divine grace, the Blessed Virgin Mary was exempted from the stain of original sin. This is what is meant by the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which many non-Catholics confuse with the miraculous birth of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mother.

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 28:19.

<sup>2</sup>Mk. 16:15-16.

<sup>3</sup>Lk. 24:47.

<sup>4</sup>Rom. 5:12.

#### *Baptism—The Gateway*

Baptism constitutes the gateway into the Church of Christ. Without it, no other sacrament can be validly received. It is the sacrament which makes a person a Christian and gives him a right to the supernatural kingdom of heaven, to which he has not title by the mere fact of his natural birth. Baptism, therefore, is a spiritual rebirth or regeneration of Christ. Thus St. Paul declares: "But when the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared. . . he saved us by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom he hath poured forth abundantly upon us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to the hope of life everlasting."<sup>1</sup>

The importance and necessity of baptism are stressed by our Blessed Lord Himself in the words addressed to Nicodemus: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup> These words embrace the whole human race. They explain the solicitude of the Church that baptism be not unduly deferred even in the case of infants, and why she authorizes any person having the use of reason to baptize when no priest is available, and the individual might otherwise die without the sacrament.

#### *Three Methods of Baptism*

Baptism may be validly administered in any of three different ways, namely, by *immersion*, or plunging the person into the water; by *infusion*, or pouring the water; and by *aspersion*, or sprinkling. The common method during the first twelve centuries was by immersion. But the other two methods were likewise used from the earliest times. Thus Tertullian, writing in the second century, describes baptism as "a sprinkling with any kind of water."<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine declares that baptism is efficacious if the water "merely sprinkles the child ever so slightly."<sup>4</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that immersion was the common method in the thirteenth century, but is careful to add: "Baptism can also be conferred by sprinkling and pouring."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Tit. 3:4-7.

<sup>2</sup>John 3:5.

<sup>3</sup>De Bapt. Ch. 6.

<sup>4</sup>In Joan. 80:3.

<sup>5</sup>Summa Theol. III. Q. 66, art. 2.

It seems most improbable that the three thousand converts received after St. Peter's discourse on Pentecost Sunday were immersed, when one considers both their number and the scarcity of water in Jerusalem. It seems likewise improbable that immersion could have been used in the baptism of the jailer and his family in the prison at Philippi and of the persons in the home of Cornelius.<sup>1</sup> Monsignor A. S. Barnes, in his painstaking work, *The Early Church in the Light of the Monuments*, reports that the baptisteries erected in the early centuries of the Christian era in the cemetery of St. Priscilla, in the Coemeterium Ostrianum, and of Pontianus bear unmistakable witness to the existence of baptism by infusion in the infant Church.

The simple fact is that Christ nowhere specified the precise manner in which water was to be applied, but left that detail, as He has left many others, to the discretion of His Church. While acknowledging the validity of baptism administered in any of these three ways, the Church now follows the uniform custom of infusion because she finds it the most convenient and practical method.

#### *Water, Desire, Blood*

There are three kinds of baptism, namely, of water, desire and of blood. Baptism of desire is that which occurs when an individual wishes to receive the sacrament, but because of circumstances is unable to receive baptism of water. Such is the teaching of the early Fathers of the Church. A striking instance of this belief occurs in the funeral sermon preached by St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, in 392 over the emperor Valentinian II, who died while still a catechumen. "I hear you express grief," says the Bishop, "that he did not receive the sacrament of baptism. Tell me, what else is there in us, except the will and petition? But he had long desired to be initiated before he came to Italy, and expressed his intention to be baptized by me as soon as possible. . . Has he not, therefore, the grace which he desired? Surely he received it because he asked it."<sup>2</sup>

Such, too, is the testimony of St. Augustine: "I find that not only suffering for the name of Christ can supply the de-

<sup>1</sup>Acts 16:48.

<sup>2</sup>De Obitu Valent., 24.

fect of Baptism, but even faith and conversion of heart, if there be no time for celebrating the sacrament."<sup>1</sup>

The Church with her all embracing love for human souls, and her ceaseless solicitude that no single individual be lost, teaches that many persons, perhaps millions, who are unaware of the command of Christ to be baptized, but who strive to lead good lives and who wish to obey God, may receive baptism by desire. Even heathens in distant lands where the gospel of Christ has scarcely penetrated, who wish to do God's will in all things may be said to receive this form of baptism. For the general intention to do the will of God includes the implicit desire to receive baptism, since this is one of God's holy commands. The implicit desire of baptism is defined as "a state of mind in which a man would ardently long for baptism, if he knew that it was necessary for salvation."<sup>2</sup> This does not imply, of course, any lessening of emphasis upon the stern necessity of all who know of Christ's explicit command to receive baptism of water. It is simply an application of the uniform teaching of the Church that God never punishes any person except in so far as he acts contrary to the light that has been given him.

The third kind of baptism is that of blood. Martyrdom for Christ was regarded by the infant Church as the equivalent for baptism of water. Thus St. Augustine reflects the teaching of the early Fathers when he writes: "To all those who die confessing Christ, even though they have not received the laver of regeneration, martyrdom will prove as effective for the remission of sins, as if they were washed at the baptismal font."<sup>3</sup>

#### *Infant Baptism*

While there is no explicit mention of the baptizing of infants in the new Testament, it is highly probable that there were some babes among the families of Lydia, Stephanas, and of the jailer at Philippi, where in each instance St. Paul baptized the whole family. The writings of the immediate successors of the Apostles remove all doubt concerning the Apostolic practice of baptizing infants. Thus St. Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John

<sup>1</sup>De Bapt. IV, 22.

<sup>2</sup>Oswald, Die Lehre von Den Sakramenten, 212.

<sup>3</sup>De Civ. Dei, XIII, 2.

the Evangelist, writes: "Christ came to save all who through Him are born again unto God; infants and children, boys and youths, and aged persons."<sup>1</sup>

Origen (182-255) declares infant baptism an Apostolic institution, necessary to wash from their souls the stain of original sin. St. Cyprian and the Third Council of Carthage in 253 decreed that the baptism of children need not be deferred until the eighth day after birth, as some maintained, but might be administered as soon as possible. St. Augustine reports that this is but the echo of the teachings of the Apostles.

If an infant should die suddenly, however, before it could be baptized, it is the common teaching of theologians under the leadership of St. Thomas Aquinas, that such children will receive a measure of happiness that is proportionate to their nature. It is sufficient, to know that the souls of unbaptized innocent children will receive not only justice and mercy, but love and generosity, "pressed down, shaken together, and running over" from God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

#### *"Among the Greatest Gifts"*

Nurses, physicians, and all who minister to new born babes in hospitals should see that any infant born of Catholic parents; if in immediate danger of death, is baptized. All that is required is that the person baptizing should have the intention to baptize according to the mind of Christ and His Church, and, while pouring water on the head of the child, say: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

It is the custom to administer conditional baptism to converts about whose previous baptism there is the slightest doubt. Thus validity may be wanting either through failure to baptize in the proper manner or through lack of the proper intention on the part of the person baptizing. Because of the necessity of baptism for the valid reception of any of the other sacraments, the Church instructs her ministers to baptize conditionally where any doubt persists after due inquiry has been made. Conditional baptism means simply that baptism is intended to be administered only on the condition that

the person has never before been validly baptized. If the person has already been validly baptized, then not the sacrament but simply the ceremonies are repeated.

The person who acts as sponsor or godparent at baptism should regard the baptized as his spiritual child and should see that he is properly instructed in the obligations of the Christian life and encouraged to fulfill them with faithfulness and perseverance unto the end.

Is it not evident from what has been said thus far, that the sacraments are among the greatest gifts of God to man? They are the channels through which the graces and blessings of the Redemption are applied to the souls of men. Baptism is the sacrament whereby the individual is reborn in Christ, and becomes a child of God and an heir of heaven. Before the eyes of a world whose sensitivity to the spiritual is apt to be dulled by daily contact with the merely physical, the Church blazons anew the commission given to her by her divine Founder when He said: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

#### *Discussion Aids*

What two texts especially show Christ's teaching on Baptism? What event related in Acts 2:41 shows that Baptism was a sacrament of the early Church? Define Baptism. May one receive the other sacraments without first having received Baptism? Why not? Name three methods of valid administration of Baptism. Which method was commonly used during the first twelve centuries? Cite authorities. What method is now most commonly used? Define and discuss baptism of water, of desire, of blood. Discuss infant baptism. Was it practised in the early Church? What is necessary for anyone, Christian or non-Christian to administer lay baptism? Explain conditional baptism.

#### *Practices:*

Learn how to baptize and be ready to assume the responsibility in case of necessity.

When you are sponsor for a child in Baptism, know your obligations and live up to them.

Renew your baptismal vows when you have an opportunity to do so.

<sup>1</sup>Adv. Haer., Lib. II, 22.



## Chapter XIV

### CONFIRMATION

Confirmation is a sacrament in which through the imposition of the bishop's hands, anointing and prayer, baptized persons are strengthened in their faith and receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost that they may live upright Christian lives.

The sacrament is commonly called *Confirmation* because it *confirms* or strengthens the soul by divine grace. It is sometimes called *the laying on of hands*, because the bishop extends his hands over those whom he confirms and prays that they may receive the Holy Ghost.

There is no explicit mention in the New Testament of its institution by Christ. But there are numerous references to its administration by the Apostles. The deacon Philip had preached the gospel in Samaria and had received a number of converts into the Church. He baptized but did not confirm them. What happened then? St. Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles: "When the Apostles who were in Jerusalem had heard that Samaria had received the word of God they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for He was not yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup>

Here it is expressly stated that Confirmation is distinct from Baptism and produces a different effect. St. Luke likewise relates that the disciples at Ephesus "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and when Paul had imposed his hands upon them the Holy Ghost came upon them and they spoke tongues and prophesied."<sup>2</sup> In his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul lists Confirmation, or the laying on of hands,

<sup>1</sup>18:14-17.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 19:6.

along with Baptism and Penance, among the fundamental truths of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Testimony of the Fathers*

The Fathers of the Church proclaim the same doctrine as the Apostles, and uniformly teach that Confirmation is a sacrament divinely instituted to strengthen the Christian in his faith. Thus Tertullian writes in the second century: "The flesh is *anointed*, that the soul may be consecrated; the flesh is marked, that the soul may be fortified; the flesh is overshadowed *by the imposition of the hands*, that the soul may be enlightened with the Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

St. Cyprian states that the sacrament of Confirmation which was conferred by the Apostles on the baptized Samaritans is likewise administered to the Christians of his day. "Because they had received," he says, "the legitimate baptism. . . what was wanting, that was done by Peter and John, that prayer being made for them and hands imposed, the Holy Ghost should be invoked and poured forth upon them. Which now also is done amongst us, so that they who are baptized in the Church are presented to the bishops of the Church, and by our prayer and imposition of hands they receive the Holy Ghost and are perfected with the seal of the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

St. Jerome likewise bears witness to the universal practice of administering confirmation. "Do you know," he writes against the sect of Luciferians of his time, "that it is the practice of the churches that the imposition of hands should be performed over baptized persons and the Holy Ghost thus invoked? Do you ask where it is written? In the Acts of the Apostles; but were there no Scriptural authority at hand, the consent of the whole world in this regard would have the force of law."<sup>4</sup>

Our last witness from the early Fathers will be St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who compares Confirmation with the Eucharist: "You were anointed with oil, being made sharers and partners of Christ. And see well that you regard it not as mere ointment; for, as the bread of the Eucharist,

<sup>1</sup>Heb. 6:12.

<sup>2</sup>De Resur. Car.

<sup>3</sup>Epist. 73.

<sup>4</sup>Dial. adv. Lucifer.

after the invocation of the Holy Ghost, is no longer mere bread but the body of Christ, so likewise this holy ointment is no longer common ointment after the invocation, but the gift of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, being rendered efficient by His Divinity. You were anointed on the forehead, that you might be delivered from the shame which the first transgressor always experienced, and that you might contemplate the glory of God with an unveiled countenance. . . . As Christ, after His baptism and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him, going forth overcame the adversary, so you likewise, after holy baptism and the mysterious unction, clothed with the panoply of the Holy Ghost, stand against the adverse power and subdue it, saying, 'I can do all things in Christ, who strengtheneth me.'<sup>1</sup>

Confirmation is still administered in the Oriental schismatic churches. Some of these churches have been separated from the Catholic Church since the fourth century. The fact that they still confer Confirmation, despite their long estrangement from Rome, offers convincing evidence of the Apostolic antiquity of this sacrament.

#### *Method of Administering*

Confirmation is administered by the bishop, and consists in the imposition of hands and the anointing with chrism, a mixture of olive oil and balm, blessed by the bishop on Holy Thursday. In anointing the forehead with chrism the bishop says: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The imposition of hands symbolizes the descent of the Holy Ghost. Oil was used in ancient times to rub the muscles and limbs of wrestlers and athletes to render them more supple. Balm is used to preserve dead bodies from corruption. Thus the anointing with chrism signifies that the persons confirmed receive the strength to fight as valiant soldiers of Christ, and the grace to preserve the supernatural life of the soul from decay. After the anointing the bishop gives the person a slight blow on the cheek to remind him that now he must be ready to suffer persecution and even death itself for the faith of Christ. The bishop then says:

<sup>1</sup>Cat. 21, Mya. & De-S/Chrism.

"Peace be with thee." It is a reminder that true peace of mind comes from a good conscience and obedience to that divine Captain under whose banner he has sworn to fight.

The name of a saint is taken, so that the person confirmed may have a model whose virtues he is asked to imitate. As in baptism, sponsors are present to promise to assist in the religious training of the person confirmed, in case the parents should neglect to do so or should die.

Confirmation is not necessary for salvation like Baptism, but all Christians should receive the sacrament if at all possible. "It ought not to be omitted by anyone," says the Council of Trent, "in a matter so full of holiness through which the divine gifts are so liberally bestowed, the greatest care should be taken to avoid all neglect."

The bishop is the ordinary minister of this sacrament. The Pope may, however, empower priests to administer this sacrament, and has frequently done so in the case of missionaries in districts where no bishop was available.

#### *Discussion Aids*

Define Confirmation. What is this sacrament often called? Why? Was Confirmation administered in the early Church? Give examples. (Acts 8:14-17; 19:6). Name some of the early Fathers who bear witness to the administration of Confirmation? Read aloud from the text their testimony. How is Confirmation administered? Who is the ordinary minister of the sacrament? Are priests ever empowered by the Pope to administer Confirmation?

#### *Practices:*

Do not neglect to be confirmed yourself and encourage others to receive this sacrament.

Meditate on the value of Confirmation, the sacrament of Catholic Action, by which you are strengthened to share in the apostolate of the hierarchy.

Practice devotion to the Holy Ghost.

## Chapter XV

## CAN PRIESTS FORGIVE SINS?

*A Plain Answer to a Common Question*

When Dr. John Rathbone Oliver, an Episcopalian minister and psychiatrist of note, was an undergraduate student at Harvard some thirty-odd years ago, his grandfather who was a devout Baptist, became greatly disturbed over John's "Romish practices." One evening he undertook to lecture him on the evil of "auricular confession." Dr. Oliver thus reports the lecture:

"I don't see why your mother lets you do such things," he said; for he thought of me still as a wayward boy. "And I never realized what it might lead to when she insisted on being baptized in the Episcopal Church. I can't imagine what your church is coming to anyhow. Confession!—Nonsense! Poppy-cock!—But I'll tell you one thing, my boy.—No mortal man shall ever come between my soul and my God."

Commenting on his grandfather's prejudice against confession, Dr. Oliver says: "Thirty years ago this was the general attitude of the average devout Protestant toward what Catholics call the Sacrament of Penance. My dear old grandfather could not see that 'A Man'—'The Man'—God in Man incarnate—had not only come between him and his God—but had made Himself the Way by which the world had been brought back to God—had become the main channel of Man's approach to the Everlasting Father."

*A Common View*

The writer has presented this incident because it illustrates the common reaction of Protestants and of non-Catholics in general toward the Catholic teaching concerning the power of her priests to forgive sins. While there is a shift in the attitude of some of the leading Protestant divines today, there is no doubt that the great masses of people outside the Catholic Church still look upon confession with misgiving and suspicion, viewing it as an invention of priestcraft and

as an unnecessary intrusion between the individual and his God.

In this chapter I propose to show that this widespread prejudice of non-Catholics against confession is based upon a common misunderstanding of its real nature, and is directly traceable to misrepresentations and caricatures, whose circulation among the general public was so greatly increased during the presidential campaign of 1928. I shall show, moreover, that the doctrine is not only reasonable and free from any just censure or offense, but that it is the certain teaching of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and that it is, in fact, among the most helpful and comforting of all His gifts to weak and sinful humanity. In establishing this truth, I shall appeal not to the authoritative pronouncements of the Church, but to the words of Christ Himself and to the court of our common understanding.

I shall ask of our dear non-Catholic readers but one favor—that they consider the matter not with minds which have prejudiced the case and are closed to all new evidence, but that they view it with an *open* mind, and with eyes single to the actual facts. I am confident this favor will be granted. For in presenting this subject to congregations in half a dozen Protestant denominations, and in answering questions in the ensuing open forum, I have unvaryingly found a real hunger to know the true Catholic viewpoint about this much misunderstood practice of confession.

*Purpose of Christ's Ministry*

What, then, is the evidence that priests have the power to forgive sins? Let us begin our answer to this question by asking: What was the dominant purpose of Christ's ministry on earth? Was it not to rescue mankind from the effects of their own sinfulness, and to provide suitable means by which they might advance in spiritual perfection and attain everlasting life? The pages of the gospel are replete with instances showing the mercy and compassion of Christ upon suffering and sinful humanity. He restores sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and vigor to the paralyzed limb. The evangelist, Matthew, sums it all up when he says simply: "and all that were sick, he healed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 8:16.



While He poured out His benefactions upon the sick of body, He was even more intent upon the healing of the ills of the soul. This primary purpose of Christ's ministry is indicated in His very name. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," says the angel, "for he shall save his people from their sins."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Christ Pardons Mary Magdalen*

Among the most touching scenes in the Master's earthly ministry are those which reveal His compassion for weak and sinful humanity, fallen by the wayside, but contrite and willing to rise again. Readers will recall how on one occasion the Jews brought to Jesus a woman taken in adultery, and inquired if she should not be stoned to death according to the law of Moses. Jesus said to them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Then he wrote on the ground. Tradition tells us that he wrote in the dust the secret sins of those who stood about. And one by one they went away. Then Jesus said to the woman who alone remained: "Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more."<sup>2</sup>

Not less dramatic than the pardoning of the woman taken in adultery is the scene that occurred when Jesus was dining at the home of Simon, the Pharisee, in Bethania. Mary Magdalen, a woman of the streets, looked down upon by the proud Pharisees, enters. With her tears she washes the feet of Jesus, anoints them with ointment from an alabaster box, and wipes them with her hair. The Pharisees appear scandalized that Christ has permitted her to so much as touch Him. They do not wish to be contaminated by her presence. Feign would they have cast her out. Simon is saying: "This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner."<sup>3</sup>

Does Jesus follow the thought of the Pharisees, and drive her away from Him with looks of scorn and words of condemnation? No, indeed! For that scarlet woman of the streets Jesus has nothing but mercy and words of infinite

tenderness. To the proud Pharisees He says, "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." Then turning to the weeping Magdalen, He speaks these sweet and comforting words which breathe the spirit of infinite mercy: "Thy sins are forgiven thee. . . go in peace."<sup>1</sup>

Bent and bowed under the weight of sin, blinded by tears of repentance, that was not Mary Magdalen alone to whom Christ spoke. It was to all womanhood and all mankind in the centuries still struggling in the womb of time. Mary was but the symbol of the race. Into the ears of men and women everywhere, bent and broken under the weight of mortal sin, blinded by tears of repentance, Christ breathes again those tender words of mercy and forgiveness: "Thy sins are forgiven thee. . . go and now sin no more."

#### *Jesus Receives Sinners*

Surely these pictures of the gentle Saviour pardoning the woman taken in adultery, forgiving the sinful Magdalen, with a prayer for the forgiveness of His murderers on his dying lips, must come into the minds of sinners like the breath of eternal spring. To souls that have fallen into the slough of dark despair, these words come, as the stars that shine in the blackened vault of a moonless sky. No matter if the soul is covered with sins of lust, or gluttony, or envy, or hatred, or all of them together, Christ still stands ready to wash them all away. "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be as red as crimson, they shall be white as wool."<sup>2</sup> "The bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench."<sup>3</sup>

So tender and considerate was Jesus toward sinners, that the Pharisees complained to the disciples saying: "Why doth your master eat with publicans and sinners? But Jesus hearing it, said: They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill. Go then and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners."<sup>4</sup> There we have in the Master's own words, the purpose of His mission on earth—to call the wayward sinners back to Him. To illustrate this

<sup>1</sup>Luke, 7:48, 50.

<sup>2</sup>Is. 1:18.

<sup>3</sup>Is. 42:3.

<sup>4</sup>Matt. 9:11-13.

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 1:21.

<sup>2</sup>John, 8:11.

<sup>3</sup>Luke, 7:39.

truth still more vividly to them, Christ then narrated three parables. The first was the beautiful parable of the Good Shepherd, who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the desert, and searches for the one that is lost until he finds it. Then carrying it home upon his shoulders, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying: "Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost." Then the Master shows the application of the parable, saying, "I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."<sup>1</sup>

The second parable illustrating this truth is about the woman, who having ten groats, loses one. Immediately she lights the candle and sweeps the house and searches diligently until she finds it. Then she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying: "Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost." The third parable is perhaps the most beautiful and touching that ever fell from the Master's lips. It is the story of the Prodigal Son. It is familiar to all. With such masterly artistry does it play upon the varied emotions that it seems to strike all the notes on the diapason of the human heart. It reaches its climax when the father seeing in the distance his prodigal son returning, runs to him, embraces him and forgives him. He orders the servants to kill the fatted calf, and wishes all to rejoice with him "because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost and is found."<sup>2</sup> That was the picture which the Master drew of Himself in the long ago. That is still the picture of Him today.

#### *Christ's Mission Continued*

Is there any fair-minded person who in the face of these clear teachings of Jesus Christ can doubt that the primary purpose of His mission on earth was to reconcile sinners to their God? Is it conceivable that He would not confer upon the Church which He founded, the power and authority to continue the mission which He Himself had come upon earth to achieve? Was Christ interested only in reconciling the sinners of His day, or was He interested in restoring all mankind to the friendship of God? If His divine mission was to

<sup>1</sup>Luke, 15:7.

<sup>2</sup>Luke, 15:24.

all mankind and not merely to the people of His day, then it follows that there must have been provided means whereby people, living after Christ in His visible form had left the earth, could still be cleansed from their sins.

This dictate of our common intelligence finds its complete verification in the action of our blessed Lord as recorded in the Gospels. For Christ conferred upon the Apostles the selfsame power of pardoning which He Himself possessed. To demonstrate that He Himself possessed this power, He worked a physical miracle. Thus He said to the man sick of the palsy: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Some of the scribes professed to be scandalized at Christ's claim to exercise such power, saying: "He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God only?" Whereupon Christ said to them: "Which is easier, to say to the man sick of the palsy: Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy) I say to thee: Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Conferring of Power*

Now this same power of pardoning, Christ promised to Peter and the other Apostles when He said: "Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."<sup>2</sup> Even more specific, and in a manner more impressive than the above, was the action of Christ after His resurrection in solemnly conferring upon His Apostles this power of pardoning: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."<sup>3</sup>

In these words Christ reiterates in plain, literal language what He had previously stated to them in the figurative terms of *binding* and *loosing*. It is to be noted that Christ prefaces the conferring of this power upon the Apostles by declaring the identity of their mission with His own: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." He says to

<sup>1</sup>Mark, 2:9-11.

<sup>2</sup>Matt. 18:18.

<sup>3</sup>John, 20:21-23.

them in effect: As I came into the world to reconcile sinners to their God, so likewise are you called upon to fulfill this same mission.

It is to be observed also that Christ gave them power not merely to announce that sins were forgiven, but actually to forgive them—"whose sins *you* shall forgive, they are forgiven them." If the authority of the Apostles were restricted to the declaration, "God pardons you," they would then require a special revelation in each case to make the pronouncement valid. Furthermore, the power conferred is a judicial one. They are not told to forgive or to retain indiscriminately but judicially, according as the sinner deserves. This obviously requires the specific acknowledgment or confession of sin. Lastly, it is to be noted that their authority is not restricted to any particular kind of sins, but extends to all without exception.

#### *Blinding Evidence*

Would it be possible to express in a clearer or more unmistakable manner the conferring upon the Apostles of this power of pardoning than in the plain language and in the solemn manner used by Christ? It would seem that the divine Master wished to eliminate for all time the possibility of any misconstruction of His meaning by reiterating in the plainest and most literal terms what He had already stated to them in the beautiful and rich metaphor of the Aramaic tongue. How is it possible for any Christian who professes to believe in the truthfulness of Christ's teachings to escape the conclusion that He conferred upon His Church the self-same power of forgiving sins which He Himself possessed?

The attempt is made by people who admit that the Apostles received this power, but deny that it was transmitted to their successors. This view, which would confine the solicitude of Christ to the people of His generation, is flatly contradicted by the statement of Christ showing that He conferred authority upon the Apostles not in their private capacity as individuals, but in their official capacity as officers of a moral corporation, His Church, which was to continue till the end of time. Thus He said to the Apostles: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations. . . And behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 28:20.

As the Apostles and disciples were all to pass away, it is evident that the authority they possessed was to be transmitted to their successors in office. Otherwise, Christ's Church would have perished with His Apostles. There is the same need today of reconciling sinners to God that there was in the days of Christ and the Apostles. The Catholic Church, founded by Christ, shall continue her divinely appointed ministry of reconciling sinners until the last soul shall be gathered into the arms of its Maker.

#### *An Important Distinction*

Let us now consider some of the common objections of this sacrament. A non-Catholic friend voiced a difficulty experienced by many people outside of the fold when he said to the writer: "I believe that God alone can forgive sins. You priests are not divine. You are entirely human like the rest of us. You have your shortcomings and weaknesses. You have no more power of forgiving sins than I have. In fact, I have as much power to forgive a sin or crime as you or any other human being." Let me now address in a kindly manner to our dear non-Catholic reader, the words I then addressed to my friend:

"Can you pardon a criminal from the state penitentiary at Joliet just the same as Governor Horner of Illinois?" I asked. "No," replied my friend, "I'll admit I can't do that." "But aren't you a man," I persisted, "and isn't Mr. Horner a man, the same as you? And didn't you say that you had as much power to forgive a misdeed as any other man?" "Yes," replied my friend, "but I make a distinction. Mr. Horner simply as a man does not have the power to pardon. It is only because he occupies the office of the Governor of Illinois that he has such authority."

"Then you admit," I pointed out, "the same basic distinction which the Church makes, between a priest simply as a human being, and as one who exercises the office of an ambassador of Christ, and exercises power solely by virtue of the office which he holds. I, in my private personal capacity as Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones, have no more power than you or any other man. But I, in my official capacity as an ambassador of Almighty God, acting in His name and by His authority, exercise a power which far transcends that of a human being and is, in truth, the very power of God Himself."



*An Analogy*

This distinction between a man in his private capacity, simply as a human being, and in his official position as an ambassador, is woven into the very warp and woof of our American government. Thus, a prominent man is sent as the ambassador of the United States to the court of St. James in London. When he acts within the limits of his duly accredited jurisdiction as our ambassador, and signs documents affecting the relations of England and the United States, is there behind his signature the feeble strength of but one elderly man? On the contrary, there is behind his signature the power and the strength, and the sovereign authority of 125 millions of citizens of our country. Why? Because he acts as our ambassador, in our name and by our authority.

It is this very distinction that the Apostle St. Paul pointed out in his epistle to the Corinthians when he explained to them the beneficent arrangement of Divine Providence for the reconciliation of sinners. "God," he says, "hath reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. . . For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors: God, as it were exhorting through us."<sup>1</sup>

St. Paul publicly proclaimed his unworthiness and frailty. He had persecuted the Church of God, and there was given to him a "sting of the flesh, an angel of Satan" to buffet him. Yet he recognized that Christ chose not angels, but weak and sinful men to be His ministers. Every priest receives his priestly power from a bishop, who traces his power back through an unbroken succession of bishops to one of the Apostles, and back ultimately to Christ Himself. That is why a priest as a duly accredited ambassador of God exercises the tremendous power of forgiving sin, a power that comes from God as its ultimate Source.

*A General Policy*

In delegating priests to act as ministers of reconciliation, Christ is but following the general policy, so clearly recorded in the Gospels, of using men as His ambassadors to administer all the sacraments and to preach and to teach in His name. Thus He commissioned the Apostles to teach in His

<sup>1</sup>II Cor. 5:18-20.

name, saying: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." Similar was His commission to them to baptize: "Teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup>

Is it not passing strange that Christians who frankly admit that Christ chose men to be the heralds of His Gospel and the ministers of baptism and the other sacraments should yet seek to exclude from them the one sacrament of reconciliation? Surely the fair-minded reader must see that in so doing they are going directly against the plain teaching not only of St. Paul but of Jesus Christ Himself.

Another difficulty experienced by many non-Catholics arises from their custom of confessing their sins to God privately, and from their belief that such a confession is sufficient to secure forgiveness. Thus a University student whom I was recently instructing in the faith said to me: "Father, I have been in the habit of including in the prayers I address to God an acknowledgment of my shortcomings. I beg Almighty God to forgive me. I have been taught to believe that God pardons me directly and immediately, without the intermediary agency of any minister or priest. Surely God has the power to forgive me. How do you know but what He does forgive me in answer to my prayers—without benefit of clergy?"

*Confession—But Not to a Priest*

Let me now address to our dear non-Catholic reader the explanation I submitted to my young friend: It is true God can forgive a person directly and immediately. It is not for us to place limits either to the power or the mercy of an omnipotent and all-merciful Father. It seems evident, however, that we ought to seek forgiveness through the means which He has revealed to us as the ordinary channel by which His pardon is extended to us, and not to demand that He act in accordance with our private whims and caprice. Have you the right to dictate the manner in which God must pardon you? Or has He the right to specify the manner in which His clemency will be extended to you? Surely, God has that right, and He has exercised it through the revelation made by His divine Son as to the ordinary means by which that for-

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 28:19.

givenness is extended to mankind. That channel, as the Gospels record, is the Sacrament of Penance, in which sins are confessed to the duly appointed ambassadors of God.

Of course if a person is dying and no priest is available, then the person may confess directly to God, and by eliciting an act of perfect sorrow, receive forgiveness directly from Him. God does not ask the impossible from any person. It is a dictate of reason, as well as the teaching of the Church, that under such unusual circumstances God not only may, but actually does, forgive the penitent in the extraordinary method just described. Indeed, whenever an act of perfect contrition is elicited, the sins are forgiven directly and immediately by God, though there remains the obligation of submitting them to the tribunal of penance.

#### *A Hollow Mockery?*

There would be, however, neither purpose nor meaning to the action of our divine Lord in solemnly delegating the power of forgiving sins to His Apostles and their successors, if people could ordinarily confess to God in secret and receive pardon directly from Him. No one would care to reveal his shortcomings to another human being, if he could go directly to God and completely disregard the ambassadors accredited by Christ as the ministers of reconciliation. The solemn conferring upon them of the power of binding and of loosing, of retaining and of forgiving, would be hollow mockery of the most foolish and deceptive character.

In reality this objection is by no means new. St. Augustine encountered it back in the fourth century. "Let no one," remarks the illustrious Bishop of Hippo, "say to himself, I do penance to God in private; I do it before God. Is it, then, in vain that Christ has said: 'Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven?' Is it in vain that the keys have been given to the Church? Do we make void the Gospel, void the words of Christ?"<sup>1</sup> In these words St. Augustine points out that the question for us is not how God is able to act, but how He has actually chosen to act. God could have chosen other means for the reconciliation of sinners, just as He could have created a world different from the present one. But it is our concern to discover how God has actually

<sup>1</sup>Sermon xxxviii.

chosen to reconcile sinners, and then to avail ourselves with gratitude of this wonderful gift to weak and sinful humanity.

Christ did not allow the remission of sin to rest solely upon the shifting sands of subjective disposition and the whimsicalities of private emotion. He established a definite objective agency for the certain accomplishment of this all-important end. There is a comfort, an ease, and an assurance of certain pardon which is given by the sacrament of confession which no private confession to God could possibly afford. If you were to ask a Catholic what are the happiest moments in his life, he would tell you that among those are the moments immediately after confession when his conscience enjoys perfect peace because there has been lifted from his soul the burden of mortal sin.

#### *Invention of Priestcraft?*

A last objection. It is contended by some that the confession of sins to a priest was not practiced in the infant Church, but represents a development of many centuries later, being an invention of priestcraft to enable the clergy to keep the laity in subjection to them. The answer is simple. In conferring this power of forgiving sins upon the Apostles Christ intended that it should be utilized, otherwise it would be meaningless. That it was utilized, is clearly recorded by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles where he tells us that, "Many of them who believed came confessing and declaring their deeds," to the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> Why did they confess their sins unless they were instructed by the Apostles to do so? It was this teaching of Christ and of the Apostles to which St. John bears witness when he says: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity."<sup>2</sup>

The significance of these texts of Scripture becomes all the more evident from the writings of the Fathers of the early Church. From the first to the last they insist upon sacramental confession as a divine institution. Let me cite just a few out of an imposing list of such witnesses. Back in the fourth century, St. Ambrose rebukes the Novations who "professed to show reverence for the Lord by reserving to

<sup>1</sup>Acts. 19-18.

<sup>2</sup>I John, 1:9.

Him alone the power of forgiving sins. Greater wrong could not be done than what they do in seeking to rescind His commands and fling back the office He bestowed. . . The Church obeys Him in both respects, by binding sin and by loosing it; for the Lord willed that for both the power should be equal."<sup>1</sup> He further teaches that this power belongs to the priesthood: "It seemed impossible that sins should be forgiven through penance; Christ granted this (power) to the Apostles and from the Apostles it has been transmitted to the office of priests."<sup>2</sup>

#### *Testimony of the Fathers*

A last witness. Writing in the fourth century, St. Basil compares the confession of sins to priests to the revealing of the secret infirmities of the body to the physician in order to secure a remedy. "In the confession of sins," he says, "the same method must be observed as in laying open the infirmities of the body; for as these are not rashly communicated to every one, but to those only who understand by what method they may be cured, so the confession of sins must be made to such persons as have the power to apply a remedy."<sup>3</sup> Later on he tells us who those persons are. "Necessarily, our sins must be confessed to those to whom has been committed the dispensation of the mysteries of God. Thus, also, are they found to have acted who did penance of old in regard of the saints. It is written in the Acts, they confessed to the Apostles, by whom also they were baptized."<sup>4</sup>

In thus testifying to the universal practice of auricular confession in the early Church, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, and St. Basil but echo the voice of all the Fathers of both the East and the West. Thus the practice continued unbroken from the days of Christ down to the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Indeed it will be a matter of surprise for most non-Catholics to know that Martin Luther bore witness to both the practice and the utility of confession, declaring that "auricular confession, as now in vogue, is useful, nay, necessary: nor would I have it abolished, since it is the remedy of afflicted conscience."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>De Poenit. I, ii, 6.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit. II, ii, 12.

<sup>3</sup>In Reg. Brev., quaest. cccix, T. II., p. 492.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., cclxxxviii., p. 516.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. de Capt. Babyl. cap. de Poenit.

#### *Christ Still Speaks*

In conclusion then, confession is not the invention of priestcraft, nor the work of bishops or popes, but the institution of Jesus Christ. It is the sacrament which enables the Church to carry on the essential mission of Christ—"to call not the just, but sinners, to repentance." It is the living testimony of Christ's undying love for mankind. When we read of the tender mercy and compassion shown by Christ toward the woman taken in adultery, toward Mary Magdalen, toward the thief on the cross, toward His very murderers, we find ourselves wishing that we could have been privileged to have lived in His day to receive from His hand a benediction and from His lips such soothing words of pardon. Then we recollect. Christ still lives in His Church! The centuries have not foreshortened His hand, nor stilled His voice. When the hand of His divinely appointed ambassador in the tribunal of confession is raised in absolution over us, with the eyes of faith we see again the hand of Christ that was raised in benediction over the sinful woman, prostrate in the dust of the street in Jerusalem, while we hear again an echo of that same divine voice that whispered to her, "Thy sins are forgiven thee. . . Go, and now sin no more."

#### *Discussion Aids*

What was the primary purpose of Christ's ministry? Give two instances in which Christ forgave sins. What was His attitude towards repentant sinners? In what three parables does He reveal this attitude? Where in the Gospels does Christ promise to His Apostles the power to forgive sins? When did He fulfill this promise? How do we know that the successors of the Apostles also have this power? Distinguish between a man and his office, giving examples. What does St. Paul call God's ministers? Did Christ appoint men as His ambassadors to carry on His work? Why not then, for Penance? Explain why Catholics confess to a priest. What does St. Augustine say on the objection that is made to confessing to a priest? Quote two New Testament texts to show the use of confession in the apostolic Church. Give the testimony of some of the Fathers. Sum up the case for Confession.



*Practices:*

Practice frequent confession in an effort to weed out your serious faults.

Pray earnestly for your confessor after every confession.

Take a non-Catholic into the Church and show and explain to him the confessional.

## Chapter XVI

## DOES CONFESSION MAKE SINNING EASY?

*A Glimpse into the "Secret" Confessional*

In the smoking compartment of a Pullman car, five men were seeking to lessen the tedium of traveling by puffing away at their cigarettes and pipes and discussing the topics of the day. They had elected the next president, decapitated the Farm Board, solved the ills of the long suffering farmer, and pointed the way out of the world's depression. After solving with easy despatch such large problems of the world, like Alexander the Great they were beginning to sigh—or was it yawn—because there were no more worlds to conquer. Suddenly during the lull, one of the group seeking to rescue the conversation from approaching death, brought up the topic of religion.

"Have you ever noticed," he queried, "that you don't ever find Catholic priests going to the county poor farms? Do you know the real reason why? I'll tell you," he continued. "They have a nice system of priestly graft. They have what they call a 'confessional' where Catholics come to have their sins forgiven at so much per. The price the priests charge for pardoning depends upon the seriousness of the sins and the number of them. It's a pretty soft racket for the priests, I'll say."

The above incident was recently narrated to me by a non-Catholic gentleman, who was present at the time, and who is now receiving instructions in the Catholic faith. In the statement just quoted, there is disclosed in all its artless nakedness a conception of confession that prevails among vast numbers of people outside of the Catholic Church. It poisons their minds against the Church and her priesthood and precludes the possibility of their making any investigation into the claims of the Church to be the institution established by Jesus Christ to teach all mankind the divinely re-

vealed truths of religion and to guide them along the paths of justice and truth and love that lead to God.

### *Charge Is Unfounded*

Vast numbers of our separated brethren, probably the majority of them, have heard this charge whispered about the confessional. Indeed, a non-Catholic acquaintance once informed me that he was assured of the truth of this charge by his own minister—one who ascends the Christian pulpit as the herald of the Prince of Truth! Catholics only smile at the ridiculousness of such a statement and marvel at the credulity of people who put any stock in it. What are we going to say to our dear non-Catholic friends in answer to this charge? We make our own the expressive words of Uncle Abe Martin: "It's alright, only it ain't so."

Not only does a priest make no charge for administering the sacrament of forgiveness, but so strict is the law of the Church, he may not accept in connection with this sacrament any offering or gift which might appear in any way as a payment for the pardon. To avoid even the appearance of simony, the Church forbids the acceptance of any gift which might be construed as a remuneration for the administration of the sacrament.

For many years *Our Sunday Visitor* has published a standing offer of \$1,000 for evidence sufficient to convince a jury of the existence of such a practice of charging money for the forgiving of sins in confession. Needless to say, none of the multitude who whisper such a charge has ever come forward to present a scintilla of evidence in answer to this long-standing challenge. The reason: No such evidence is to be found anywhere on the face of the earth. The practice exists only in the disturbed imagination of the gullible—the sorry victims of deliberate misrepresentation. If the non-Catholic reader of this chapter still entertains any doubt about the truth of this statement, let him settle it for all time by going into any Catholic confessional in the world and asking the priest how much he will charge to absolve him from his sins!

### *Secrecy of Confession*

Another objection to confession frequently encountered among non-Catholics is that it is a needless prying into pri-

vate matters, embarrassing the penitent with the fear that his secret sins may be made public. This difficulty, like the preceding, could exist only in the minds of people who have never had any experience in the reception of this sacrament. The simple facts are: No name is ever mentioned in confession. The confessor must observe with scrupulous fidelity the same laws of propriety which bind every other human being. The sins are confessed briefly, without irrelevant details, in an entirely impersonal and objective manner. The penitent is free to go to confession to any priest he chooses.

He is assured not only of complete privacy but of the most absolute and inviolable secrecy. Kneeling in a part of the confessional, partitioned off from the chamber wherein the confessor sits, his voice penetrates through a small grated aperture into the ear of the ambassador of God. Under no circumstances whatsoever, not even to save his own life, might a confessor reveal the tiniest venial sin breathed into his ear in confession. All history is eloquent with the story of the deathless fidelity with which this trust has been observed. Cheerfully have priests gone to their death rather than violate in the slightest way the seal of confession.

Thus in the fourteenth century, King Wenceslaus of Bohemia, insanely jealous of the Queen and curious to know what she mentioned in confession, summoned before him her confessor, Father John Nepomucene. "What is it," said the Emperor, "that the Queen confesses to you? Reveal it to me and I shall give you riches. Refuse and I shall cast you into the dungeon." "Not for you nor for all the kingdom of Bohemia," replied the saintly priest, "will I reveal that which has been disclosed only to the ambassador of God."

Whereupon the Emperor had him cast into the dungeon. Then seeking to shake his iron will, his body was stretched on a rack, and burning torches were placed against his flesh. In spite of the excruciating torture, no words escaped his lips save the words, "Jesus" and "Mary." Seeing that he was obdurate and unmoved by any instrument of torture his savage cruelty could devise, the Emperor had him bound hand and foot and on Ascension eve, the sixteenth of May, he was hurled from the bridge at Prague into the dark waters of the Moldau river—a martyr to the seal of the confessional. When in 1719, after the lapse of over three centuries, his

grave in the Prague cathedral was opened, his flesh had disappeared. But one member, though shriveled, remained uncorrupted. That was his tongue—in its silence still giving glory to God and testifying with its mute eloquence to the unbroken seal of the sacrament.

The martyrdom which St. John Nepomucene suffered illustrates what every priest in Christendom would willingly undergo rather than reveal the tiniest venial sin mentioned in confession. It is no exaggeration to say that in all the scope of human life, there is no secrecy so absolute, impenetrable and inviolable as that which is protected by the seal of the confessional.

#### *Indirect Encouragement to Sin?*

The objection, however, which is even more widespread among non-Catholics, and which apparently weighs more heavily with them than either of the ones discussed above, is of a different character. A non-Catholic inquirer stated the difficulty which many, if not the majority of people outside the Church, experience in regard to confession in the following way:

"Non-Catholics in general," he said, "feel that the securing of pardon for sins simply by telling them to a priest, places too much stress and value upon the external and mechanical aspects of repentance, and too little upon true internal sorrow for sin, wherein alone genuine repentance consists. The mere mechanical enumeration of sins to a priest gives no assurance of contrition or purpose of amendment. The way it works out in practice is that by making the forgiveness of sins so easy to obtain, confession rather encourages moral laxity. An individual, tempted to commit some sin, instead of being deterred is rather encouraged to go ahead and commit the misdeed, knowing that whatever its gravity be, he will be pardoned merely by mentioning it under the protecting anonymity of the confessional. Instead of a barrier to sin," he concluded, "confession with its emphasis upon external formalism thus serves as an indirect encouragement or incentive to commit sin."

Like all the other objections to confession, this one is based upon a failure to understand the real nature of the sacrament of confession, and of the dispositions requisite

for its valid reception. If the picture drawn by our non-Catholic friend were an accurate one, we could not quarrel with the conclusion he reaches. The fact is, however, that he has described the outward shell but has overlooked the very heart of the sacrament. Let me now address in a kindly way to our dear non-Catholic reader the explanation I submitted to my friend who voiced the difficulty just mentioned.

#### *No Forgiveness Without Sorrow*

If the forgiveness of sins were dependent upon the mere mechanical enumeration of them to a priest, then confession would justly be open to the charge of formalism and externalism in the worst sense, and would be properly indicted for its neglect of the internal dispositions of mind and heart and will, wherein all hope of reform must be. But the fact is that the Church teaches in the clearest and most unmistakable manner that there can be no forgiveness of sin unless there is sorrow for sin and purpose of amendment by the penitent. Thus she declares that if a person confessed his sins to all the priests, bishops, and cardinals in Christendom, and even to the Holy Father himself, and even if they all pronounced the words of absolution over him, there would be no real forgiveness if he did not have internal sorrow for sin and the resolve to avoid sin in the future.

More important even than the examination of conscience is the arousal of contrition and purpose of amendment. Thus the Council of Trent, in enumerating the qualities necessary for a good confession, cites sorrow for sin as holding first place and as including the purpose of amendment. "Contrition," says the Council of Trent, "which holds the first place among the acts of the penitent is sorrow of heart and detestation for sin committed, with the resolve to sin no more."<sup>1</sup>

Hence to state that the sinner receives pardon merely by "telling his sins to a priest," is to misrepresent the essential nature of the sacrament. If an individual while telling his sins in confession, had the intention of repeating them just as soon as the occasion offered, not only would he not be pardoned, but he would be guilty of another sin—that of making mockery of the sacrament. Likewise, if a person

<sup>1</sup> *Sess. XIV, c. 4.*



has stolen the property of another, and refuses to restore it to its rightful owner, no priest would absolve him. Why? Because he lacks the disposition necessary for forgiveness, namely, the firm purpose of amendment, which would include in this case the intention to restore the stolen property.

#### *Interior Reform Necessary*

Where funds have been stolen and retained for a considerable time, not only must the original amount be returned but the interest which would ordinarily accrue on it must likewise be added to the amount restored. This applies not only to tangible goods, but also to intangible ones, such as a person's good name and reputation. Thus if an individual has robbed another of his good name by telling lies about his character, he is bound to promise to repair the damage done to his neighbor, even though it cause embarrassment to himself, in order to secure forgiveness.

From this it is apparent that the sacrament of penance is no mere glossing over of sin, no mere placing of a white mantle of forgiveness on a person, whose heart and will and soul are black with the corruption of unrepented sin. On the contrary, the sacrament requires that the renovation must be from within, that the mind and heart and soul must be detached from the sin and attached to God in love and loyalty. In other words, confession strikes at the very root of the evil by penetrating beyond the outward surface into the very heart and will and soul of man wherein lie the roots of good and evil.

Hence it is morally impossible for any individual to remain an habitual addict of any vice, if he will come often and make a good confession. Why? Because the repeated arousal of the strong determination of the will to avoid the sinful practice in the future is bound eventually, aided by God's grace, to break the links in the chain of any sinful habit. For it is to be noted that sincere purpose of amendment requires the prudent avoidance of the occasions: persons, places, or things, which past experience shows, have led one into sin. What more is there that any human being can do to free himself from habits of sin than is required by the sacrament of confession? To the native strength of the will is added the grace given by God in the sacrament, and the addi-

tional strength and encouragement that comes from the consciousness that one is starting with a clean slate instead of one already disfigured by so many past transgressions that an additional one would not make much difference. *It is no exaggeration then to say that confession is the most powerful and effective agency for the moral reformation of humanity that exists in the world today.*

#### *Powerful Lever For Good*

Sermons, lectures, exhortations, books are all too general. Confession alone comes to close grips with the reins of conduct in each individual, and pulls the reins so strongly that no individual can be insensitive to its tugging nor mistake the direction of its guidance. In public sermons, to employ a military phrase, the fire is at random, it may hit or miss; but in the confessional it is a dead shot—right to the heart of the penitent.

No wonder it was, then, that after over fifty years of ministering to the moral and spiritual needs of men, seeking to uplift them by sermons, by writing books, and by building schools for their religious education, Cardinal Gibbons toward the close of his long and eventful life voiced his deep conviction on the matter in the following memorable words: "My experience is that the confessional is the most powerful lever ever erected by a merciful God for raising men from the mire of sin." To this judgment of the distinguished Cardinal so beloved by his fellow citizens of every faith, probably every priest who has had even a modicum of experience in the care of souls would heartily subscribe.

This is the conviction not only of those who have had actual experience of the sacrament, such as priests and penitents, but it is also the conclusion reached by those outside the Church who have made careful observations on the effects of the confessional upon the lives of those who frequent it. Thus Voltaire, who was no friend of Christianity, found himself forced to declare "that there is not perhaps a more useful institution than confession."<sup>1</sup> Similar is the observation of Rousseau, who was not less hostile to the Church: "How many restitutions and reparations does not confession cause among Catholics!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Remarques sur l'Olympe.

<sup>2</sup>Emile.

In Germany, the great philosopher, Leibnitz, though a non-Catholic, paid tribute to the usefulness of the confessional to the welfare of society. "This whole work of sacramental penance," he writes, "is indeed worthy of the Divine wisdom and if aught else in the Christian dispensation is meritorious of praise, surely it is this wondrous institution. For the necessity of confessing one's sins deters a man from committing them, and hope is given to him who may have fallen again after expiation. The pious and prudent confessor is in very deed a great instrument in the hands of God for man's regeneration. For the kindly advice of God's priest helps man to control his passions, to know the lurking places of sin, to avoid the occasions of evil doing, to restore ill-gotten goods, to have hope after depression and doubt, to have peace after affliction, in a word, to remove or at least lessen all evil, and if there is no pleasure on earth like unto a faithful friend, what must be the esteem a man must have for him, who is in very deed a friend in the hour of his direct need?"<sup>1</sup>

#### *Non-Catholics Pay Tribute*

In Great Britain, Dr. Martensen, a distinguished Protestant theologian, pays tribute to the confessional not only because it ministers directly to the social welfare by insisting upon truth, honesty, and justice, and upon restitution when the latter is violated, but also because it ministers directly to the hunger of the individual soul for personal spiritual regeneration. "Absolution," he says, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, derived from the full power of binding and loosing which the Church has inherited from the Apostles is not unconditional, but depends on the same condition on which the gospel itself adjudges the forgiveness of sins, namely, change of heart and faith. . .

"It cannot easily be denied that confession meets a deep need of human nature. There is a great psychological truth in the saying of Pascal, that a man often attains for the first time a true sense of sin, and a true stayedness in his good purpose, when he confesses his sins to his fellow man, as well as to God. Catholicism has often been commended

<sup>1</sup>*Systema Theologicum*, p. 270.

because by confession it affords an opportunity of depositing the confession of his sins in the breast of another man, where it remains kept under the seal of the most sacred secrecy, and whence the consolation of the forgiveness of sins is given him in the very name of the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

In our own country there is probably no voice in all of Protestantism at the present day, which is listened to with such eagerness and respect by so vast a number of our fellow countrymen as that of the Rev. Dr. Harry E. Fosdick, pastor of the Riverside Baptist Church of New York. Speaking before more than 1000 ministers at the annual meeting of the Greater New York Federation of Churches, Dr. Fosdick strongly urged the restoration of the confessional to Protestant churches. "We Protestants are losing more," he said, "than we have any business to lose by not coming in closer contact with the individual. When a Catholic would take his mental troubles to his priest, the Protestant would go to a psychoanalyst or like specialist, and the church would gain nothing in experience. . . The confessional, which Protestantism threw out the door, is coming back through the window, in utterly new forms, to be sure, with new methods and with an entirely new intellectual explanation appropriate to the Protestant churches, but motivated by a real determination to help meet the inward problems of individuals.

"Clergymen are giving different names to this form of activity, such as 'trouble clinics,' 'personal conferences on spiritual problems,' 'the Protestant confessional.' The name makes little difference. What does matter is the renewed awareness in the churches that they are in danger of surrendering to the psychoanalyst that vast field of human need where the confession of sin and spiritual misery is met with sympathetic and intelligent treatment. To be sure, a wise minister will work with a psychiatrist, not without one, but if the churches substitute any other kind of success for the successful handling of the spiritual aspects of individual problems, they will be vacating their most obvious function."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Christian Dogmatics*, p. 443 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Literary Digest*, Dec. 17, 1927, p. 2.

*Meets Psychological Need*

It is to be noted that Dr. Fosdick urges the restoration of the confessional on the grounds that it ministers to the psychological needs of people oppressed with a consciousness of sin. In other words, confession does for the masses the work for which the wealthy pay large fees to the psychoanalyst and the psychiatrist. There can be no doubt that the confessional is of distinct value in promoting the mental health of people. It is a principle of modern psychology that a source of disturbance to one's peace of mind, if not removed by the process of rationalization, that is, by realizing that worry won't help matters, or that the item is being stretched to assume undue importance, or by some other therapeutic means, tends to form a central focus which gradually spreads to other areas of one's mental life, and thus creates various types of mental disorders. Such is the fertile breeding ground of many of the phobias, tics, and complexes which upset the delicate balance of one's mental life, and cause one to appear "queer."

Now one of the sources of worry common probably to the vast majority of mankind is traceable to their consciousness of doing at times what they know is morally wrong, and then experiencing the gnawings of remorse. If the canker of remorse bites continuously at the individual's peace of mind because of the persistence of the sense of guilt, not only the individual's happiness is likely to be seriously disturbed but the very health of his mind is apt to be affected. What is probably the most effective means, verified by the findings of modern psychology as well as by the experience of the race, for the removal of such worries as are undermining one's mental health? The simple means of disclosure, unbosoming oneself to one's friend, revealing the sin—the cause of the worry—to the priest in the secrecy of the confessional.

When the sin is confessed, the sense of guilt is washed away, and peace of mind returns. It is like opening the door of a closet, in which mildew has accumulated in the darkness. When the fresh air and the bright sunshine stream in, the parasitic denizens who thrive only in the darkness, speedily vanish. So when the door of the mind is opened, and the distorted fancies and exaggerated worries are exposed to the sunlight of reason and the wholesome counsel of

friends, they too have a marked tendency to disappear. This purging of the mind of the worries that prey upon it, and endanger its even functioning is called "catharsis" by psychologists. While comparatively few may be familiar with its scientific name, practically every adult human being has experienced it and knows how necessary it is for his peace of mind.

*Restoring Peace of Mind*

Every confessor can recall numerous instances where the relief experienced by the penitent has been indeed remarkable. Penitents at times enter the confessional, so visibly disturbed in mind that their voices quaver and break, sighs of anguish escape them, and tears even course down their faces. After their confession is completed, and they receive the absolution of God's ambassador, and hear from him words of counsel and encouragement to rise and strive again with renewed courage and faith in God's abiding help, they leave the confessional enjoying a calmness, a peace of mind, and a courage that has transformed them into new men and new women.

Familiar as such occurrences are to priests and to members of the Catholic laity, it is interesting to note that even non-Catholics have observed the visible effects of the confessional upon people tortured with the guilt of grievous sin. Thus Dr. John Rathbone Oliver, an Episcopalian minister and a psychiatrist of distinction, who was kneeling in a Catholic church on Saturday afternoon when confessions were being heard, narrates the following striking instance of such a transformation:

"A few weeks ago, I was kneeling at the back of such a church. In front of me there knelt a girl of perhaps sixteen or less. She was tense—tormented, apparently. She twisted about; she could not keep still. The glimpse that I caught of her showed me the face of a person in great mental distress. I could not take my eyes from her. She seemed anxiety personified. A few moments later, she got up, and went into the confessional. I also got up, from my knees, and walked up to the high altar to kneel before the Blessed Sacrament. Time passed quickly there. Then some one pushed by me—and knelt down on the altar steps, just a few feet away. It was the same girl. But I have never seen such a change in



any human being. All her tenseness was gone; the lines of worry had been smoothed from her face. No signs of mental torment now; no anxiety—only perfect relaxation—peace—and, apparently, a great happiness—for her lips were parted in a smile. If I, as a psychiatrist, could have done for that girl in three hours what had been accomplished in fifteen minutes, I should have thought myself a clever physician indeed.

"I watched her make the sign of the cross, from forehead to breast, from shoulder to shoulder, with a hand that was steady, co-ordinated, efficient, exact. Then she folded her arms on her breast, and lifted her face to the Tabernacle. That face still bore traces of dried tears; but the eyes were bright—unclouded. I left her there—with a prayer of thanksgiving—left her there at peace with man—and, if I may say so without irreverence—at home with her God.

"All magic—all superstition—all emotional self-hypnosis,' my materialistic friends may say. Well, let them say so as often as they please. I shall begin to listen to them when their own particular type of magic and hypnosis gets the same results."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Psychiatrists Pay Tribute*

In recent years, not only religious leaders but professional psychologists have come to recognize more clearly and with increasing appreciation the wholesome and healing influence which the confessional exercises upon the mental health of the hundreds of millions of people who find in it relief and encouragement. In a volume on *Mental Hygiene* by Groves and Blanchard, which Dr. J. Howard Beard, the distinguished head of the department of health at the University of Illinois, informs me is considered a modern classic on this subject, the noted authors, though non-Catholics themselves, pay the following high tribute to the therapeutic value of the Catholic confessional:

"The Roman Catholic Church's provision for oral confession to the priest has a moral and therapeutic value which Protestant Churches generally lack. The psychiatrist is frequently called upon to act the role of priest, listening to revelations of guilt that the patient dare not share with any

<sup>1</sup>Scribners, July, 1930, p. 68.

one except when protected by the professional code of secrecy, and assuring the patient that the guilt need not longer be carried as a hidden burden. Protestantism needs to develop a better method of dealing with personal guilt than public confession of general sinfulness. There is a craving to particularize the guilt to get definitely rid of the burden, and this impulse at present is adequately recognized only by the Roman Catholic confession."<sup>1</sup>

While the mere disclosure of sin to a sympathetic friend has a therapeutic value, confession in the Catholic Church has a far greater and more beneficial effect because it not only permits the confession of sins but gives to the penitent that which he craves above all else—God's pardon. It is this latter element which far more than the former restores peace and tranquility to the troubled soul. Why should he worry, when because of his sorrow and purpose of amendment he has received through the ambassador of God the pardon of the Most High? There is a craving, it is true, to confess one's guilt. But the far deeper and more insistent craving is for the remission of the guilt. This is the real reason why the confessional exercises such a marvelous influence upon the mental health of penitents.

Every Catholic will view with sympathy the desire of Dr. Fosdick and other leaders of Protestantism to restore the confessional to their churches. But he cannot fail to perceive that the confessional will yield but a small fraction of its rich therapeutic value, until they likewise restore the doctrine upon which the confessional is founded, namely, the actual forgiveness of the sins confessed to the properly accredited ambassador of Almighty God.

#### *An Important Difference*

It was this important truth which that discerning scholar, the Rev. Dr. John Rathbone Oliver, perceived and expressed with admirable lucidity in an article on Psychiatry and the Confessional in *Scribner's*, July, 1930. He is apparently in the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Episcopal church for he includes himself in the Catholic body. Commenting on the marked trend among Protestant leaders to restore the confessional because of its therapeutic value he says:

"Our Protestant brothers are doing something of the

<sup>1</sup>p. 318.

same kind. But it is an utter misunderstanding of the situation to imagine that the Protestant can ever undo the damage of the 'outlawing of the confessional.' It is possible that a Presbyterian or a Methodist pastor might set up in his church a so-called 'confessional box'; he might sit on one side of it behind the grating, and might listen to the outpourings of the sins and troubles of some members of his congregation. No doubt the person who there poured out his soul, might be benefitted by the procedure; might get helpful advice and go away feeling happier. But all the confessional boxes in the world could not bring back to the Protestant bodies the one thing that really matters—the one thing that is more important than confession—than all the confessional boxes in the world—the thing that we Catholics call 'absolution.'

"It is the 'absolution' that gives to the confessional its great power to help and to heal. It is the Sacrament of Penance, in which by the 'power that Our Lord Jesus Christ has left upon earth to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him,' the priest, acting in Christ's name and by His authority, 'absolves from sin'—in which he, as it were, pours upon the head of the penitent the precious blood that was shed upon the cross, in the one perfect sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. And where there is no priesthood, there is no absolving priest; where there is no absolving priest there is no absolute blotting out of all past sin, no complete restoration to God's grace and to complete forgiveness. To the Catholic, every confession and absolution is a fresh start. He begins his Christian life all over again. All past guilt is wiped out. And fresh grace is given him to start on the road of life once more."

#### *Requires Improvement in Life*

It is to be noted, then, that over and above the benefit which confession gives to mankind in restoring their tranquillity and peace of mind by the assurance of their forgiveness by God—a peace of mind which all the money in the world could not buy—it provides human society with a benefit still greater. It brings about the *actual regeneration* of the human character, and serves as the most effective agency for moral reform in the world. It does not allow its

values to remain in the realm of mere feelings. It insists that these subjective dispositions be translated into action.

It requires that the individual prove the sincerity of his resolves by a better moral life. It demands that the individual translate his aspirations for nobility of character into deeds of honesty, justice, and charity in all the relations of man to man. It demands not mere velleities but positive volitions. It demands deeds, not words; actual reform, not mere promises.

Hence, confession is not to be regarded as a mere device to assuage disturbed feelings, or to relieve the mind oppressed with a sense of guilt—valuable as is its contribution in this regard—but it is to be regarded as a powerful lever that actually lifts man prostrate in the mire of vice, and sets him to walk, with head erect, upon the paths of justice and mercy and truth. The sacrament of confession reflects not only the mercy of the Divine Master, Jesus Christ, who came "to call not the just but sinners to repentance" but it reflects His justice as well. Rightly, then, does the sacrament demand that the penitent struggle manfully and courageously to keep the promises he makes in confession, to avoid sin and to rise to a higher and a nobler life. Because the sacrament works in the secrecy of the human soul, where no eye but God's is a witness of its stirrings, this world will never fully know the powerful leverage for moral regeneration which the sacrament exercises upon the lives of the hundreds of millions of people who come to it for renewed hope and courage.

But if it were given to us to penetrate the veil that hides from our eyes the secret springs of human conduct, we are convinced that we would find that the avoidance of sin and crime are deterrents more powerful and efficacious than all the policemen in the world. Not only is confession a bulwark against the relapse into vice, but it is a most powerful incentive to a life of virtue. The sacrament of confession is not only the perpetuation of the voice of Christ speaking to the sinful woman prostrate in the dust of the street in Jerusalem, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," but it is also an extension of that divine hand which raised her up, and set her unsteady feet to tread henceforth the shining path of virtue, while the voice whispered the sweet command: "Go now and sin no more."

### Discussion Aids

How is the charge that a money payment is exacted for absolution to be answered? The charge that confessors reveal the sins of penitents? Relate the story of King Wenceslaus and St. John Nepomucene. How answer the charge that confession is an encouragement to sin? What two conditions *must* a penitent fulfill before his sins can be forgiven? Explain sorrow for sin and purpose of amendment fully, giving examples. Quote Cardinal Gibbons, Voltaire, Rousseau, Dr. Fosdick, and Leibnitz on Confession. Give the psychologist's and the psychiatrist's view on confession. Speak of Confession as an agency in the improvement of human society.

#### *Practices:*

Let your demeanor before and after confession show that you realize the seriousness of what you are doing.

In explaining confession dwell especially on the necessity of true contrition and purpose of amendment.

Try to influence a negligent Catholic to go to confession.

### Chapter XVII

## INDULGENCES: WHAT ARE THEY?

### *Light on a Much Misunderstood Question*

Some time ago Professor L. M. Larson, the distinguished head of the Department of History at the University of Illinois, called upon the writer and thus stated the object of his visit. "Father," he said, "I am writing a history of England. I have encountered so many different and conflicting statements of historians as to the nature of an indulgence, that I have come to you, as a representative of the Catholic Church, to find out what an indulgence really is. I want to know the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church on this subject, so that I can present the doctrine truthfully and accurately to my readers, instead of merely repeating the confusing statements of second-hand authorities who have never understood what the Church really means by an indulgence."

It is because many other writers have been less careful than Professor Larson, and have taken their idea of indulgences from the caricatures drawn by misinformed or prejudiced sources, that there prevail among our non-Catholic fellow citizens to this very day, many grotesque misconceptions as to the meaning of an indulgence. Many consider it a pardon of past sin, others regard it as a license to commit future sin. Some think of it as an exemption from a law or duty which binds other Christians. In some histories it is depicted as a sort of magical lever that lifts a soul from purgatory.

### *Indulgences for Sale?*

Coloring all these notions, is the idea that "whatever the kind of indulgence, it may be purchased at a stipulated price. They are all for sale, and the lust for money is at the root of the whole business." The term "indulgences" has thus come to stand in the minds of our separated brethren as the sym-



bol of mercenary fraud and corruption in the Church of Rome. It is regarded as the match that kindled the flames of Luther's revolt against the most repugnant elements of the superstition and humbuggery of the Roman system.

May I ask our dear non-Catholic readers to follow the example of Professor Larson, whose insistence upon going to the original sources to find the real facts in the case, has enabled him to achieve world eminence in his field? In so doing they will get an insight into the true meaning of an indulgence. They will then see that what they fight against is not the Catholic doctrine of indulgences, but the grotesque caricatures drawn either by the misinformed or by the Church's antagonists.

I do not hesitate to say that if an indulgence were really the mercenary fraud commonly imagined by non-Catholics, I too would rebel against it with vehemence not less than theirs. It is only because I know the authentic teaching of the Church on this subject that I see in indulgences an incentive not to evil, but to deeds of virtue and holiness. Here again I would ask of our non-Catholic readers but one favor—an *open* mind. In return, I give the assurance that instead of playing the role of an attorney, glossing over all the hostile evidence and playing up only that which is favorable, I shall essay the role of the historian recording with impartial hand the abuses as well as the wholesome fruits of the practice of indulgences.

### *The Real Meaning*

What is the real meaning of an indulgence? It is simply the remission of *the temporal punishment due to sin*, after the sin itself has been forgiven. The one phrase in the above definition that may not be entirely clear to our non-Catholic reader is "temporal punishment." To understand that, one must first understand that according to the Catholic Church, every grievous sin has attached to it a two-fold penalty—an eternal punishment to be undergone in the next world, and a temporal punishment, which is suffered either in this world, or in purgatory, or partly in both.

The guilt, with its eternal punishment, is always forgiven in a good confession. The temporal punishment may or may not be remitted in confession, depending upon the

quality of the contrition. If it is not forgiven, it may be remitted: (1) through the propitiatory efficacy of deeds of penance and virtue, and (2) through the gaining of indulgences attached by the Church to certain works of charity and piety.

Basic in this whole conception is the idea that even after the eternal punishment attached to mortal sin is remitted, there may still remain temporal punishment. While this idea does not seem to be familiar at the present time to those outside the Catholic Church, it is nevertheless rooted in the Scriptures. Thus Moses, even though he was forgiven his transgressions by God, was nevertheless punished by not being permitted to enter the Promised Land, being allowed to view it only from the distance of Mt. Nebo.

### *Temporal Punishment*

David was forgiven for his double crime of murder and adultery, but was compelled to suffer a temporal punishment in the violent death of his son Absalom. "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die," said the prophet Nathan. "Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing, the child that is born to thee, shall surely die."<sup>1</sup> Here is a clear instance of a temporal punishment remaining after the eternal guilt has been remitted. To satisfy the requirement of God's justice for such temporal punishment, and thereby to remit it, is the function of indulgences.

Let me endeavor to make still clearer to my dear non-Catholic readers the meaning of temporal punishment, so essential to the understanding of indulgences, by the following illustration. Suppose Tom Smith is guilty of stealing a hundred dollars from the home of his neighbor, John Brown. The culprit is arrested and the judge pronounces him guilty and sentences him to prison for a year by way of punishment.

While in prison Mr. Smith comes to realize the grievous injustice he inflicted upon his neighbor by his theft, and is thoroughly repentant. He writes to Mr. Brown, humbly asks his forgiveness and assures him that as soon as he earns a hundred dollars after he is out of prison, he will repay him. Touched by the evident sincerity of the prisoner's contrition

<sup>1</sup>2 Sam. 12:13-14.

and purpose of amendment, Mr. Brown asks the governor to pardon him. Upon investigation, the governor finds that the prisoner has served four months of his sentence and has a record of good behaviour during this period. Because of this fact and because of the circumstances mentioned by Mr. Brown, the governor remits the remaining eight months of imprisonment and releases the prisoner on parole.

The sentence to serve a year's imprisonment may be said to represent the temporal punishment due to sin even after the sinner has repented and the formal guilt of the sin has been remitted. The remission of the remaining eight months of the sentence may be said to represent an indulgence. The illustration also serves to show the wholesome effect that the temporal punishment is likely to have upon the penitent sinner.

#### *Power to Grant Indulgences*

Granting then the fact of a temporal punishment, what is the evidence that the Church possesses the power to remit it? This is to be found in the authority vested by Christ in His Church when He said to Peter: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon the earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."<sup>1</sup> From these words of Christ it is clear that no limit was placed upon the power of the Church to loose from any and all bonds of sin—from the temporal as well as from the eternal punishment. Indulgences constitute, therefore, a supplement to the sacrament of penance, removing every obstacle that separates the creature from the friendship of his God.

Indulgences are of two kinds: *partial* or *plenary*. A partial indulgence remits a portion of the temporal punishment, while a plenary one remits all of it.

#### *Transfer of Indulgences*

In addition to being applicable to the living, some indulgences are likewise applicable to the souls in purgatory. To understand the possibility of such a transfer of indulgences, it is necessary first to understand these three teachings of Christ and of His Church:

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 16:19.

(1) *The Communion of Saints*. This means that the members of Christ's Church, whether on earth, in heaven, or in purgatory, are all members of Christ's mystical body and are all capable of assisting one another by their prayers and good works. "We being many," says St. Paul, "are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."<sup>1</sup>

(2) *The Principle of Vicarious Satisfaction*. To every good action of the just man there is attached a twofold value: merit and satisfaction or atonement. Merit is personal and cannot be transferred. Satisfaction, however, can be applied to others. This truth St. Paul thus communicates to the Colossians: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, all Christians admit that we have been redeemed through the propitiatory sufferings and death of Christ. This principle of vicarious atonement lies, therefore, at the very heart of the Christian faith.

(3) *The Spiritual Treasury of the Church*. Since Christ suffered far more than was necessary to redeem us, and since there resulted from His death a fund of infinite satisfaction, it follows that there has been created a vast and inexhaustible treasury which the Church may draw upon in payment of temporal punishment. This spiritual treasury has been increased by the superabundant satisfaction of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints. "All the saints," says St. Thomas, "intended that whatever they did or suffered for God's sake should be profitable not only to themselves but to the whole Church."<sup>3</sup>

The existence of an infinite treasury of merits in the Church was formally set forth by Pope Clement VI in 1343. "Upon the altar of the Cross," says the Pope, "Christ shed of His blood not merely a drop, though this would have sufficed, by reason of the union with the Word, to redeem the whole human race, but a copious torrent—thereby laying up an infinite treasure for mankind. This treasure He neither wrapped up in a napkin nor hid in a field, but entrusted to Blessed Peter, the key-bearer, and his successors, that they

<sup>1</sup>Rom. 12:5.

<sup>2</sup>Col. 1:24.

<sup>3</sup>Quodlib. II, q. vii, art. 16.

might for just and reasonable causes distribute it to the faithful in full or in partial remission of the temporal punishment due to sin." Hence when Luther asserted that "the treasures of the Church from which the pope grants indulgences are not the merits of Christ and the saints," the statement was promptly condemned by Leo X.

For without such a spiritual treasury for the Church to draw upon in payment of temporal punishment still due by her children, indulgences would be both ineffective and meaningless. It is part of the authority committed by Christ to Peter and his successors to specify to what extent, and under what conditions, the funds of this common treasury shall be made available to the individual members.

#### *An Ancient Doctrine*

As the concept of a common spiritual treasury consisting of the inexhaustible merits of Christ and the superabundant satisfaction of the saints, while essential to the understanding of indulgences is unfamiliar to those outside the fold, it may be helpful to show how deeply imbedded in the Christian faith was this doctrine, centuries before the birth of Protestantism. Back in the thirteenth century, St. Thomas bears witness to the universal belief of Christians in the existence of such a treasury and in its availability to remit temporal punishment.

"All this treasure," says St. Thomas, "is at the dispensation of the chief rulers of the Church, inasmuch as our Lord gave the Keys of the Church to Peter. When then the utility or necessity of the Church requires it, the chief ruler of the Church can draw from this infinite store of merits to communicate to any one who through charity is a member of the Church, as much as he deems to be opportune, whether it be such as will suffice for the total remission of his punishment, or up to a certain portion of the whole: in such wise, namely, that the Passion of Christ (through whom alone the merits of the others have efficacy) and the other saints may be imparted to him just as if he himself had suffered what was necessary for the remission of his sin—as happens when one person satisfies for another."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>op. cit.

These then are the three basic truths, the communion of saints, the principle of vicarious atonement, and the common treasury of the Church, upon which the doctrine of the applicability of indulgences to the souls of the faithful departed, as well as to others among the living, rests. The authority to grant indulgences, as has been indicated, flows from the power of the keys, the unlimited power of binding and of loosing, conferred by Christ upon St. Peter and his successors.

#### *An Important Difference*

There is an important difference in the application of indulgences to the living and to the dead. The living are subjects of the Church's immediate jurisdiction; the deceased are not. To the former she grants an indulgence as an exercise of her judiciary authority. To the latter she makes an indulgence available by way of suffrage. That is, she petitions God, under whose sole jurisdiction the deceased are, to accept the works of satisfaction and in consideration thereof to mitigate the sufferings of the souls in purgatory.

Can we say, therefore, that an indulgence gained by the living for any individual in purgatory will be applied with infallible certainty to that particular soul? While we piously believe that the individual soul will be benefited to some degree, we cannot say with certainty that it will be applied in its entirety to that particular soul. That lies within the jurisdiction of Almighty God, and we rest content with the knowledge that the case is in the hands of a Father Who is both infinitely just and infinitely merciful.

It is well, too, to remember that there are some veils that cannot be penetrated this side of eternity. The effort to do so usually results in fine spun speculations and subtleties, which do not carry conviction, and which are usually less satisfactory than the humble acknowledgment that we simply do not know. The answer to this question is one of the many then that we leave with content to the wisdom of our heavenly Father.

#### *A Glossing Over?*

"Is not an indulgence," queried a non-Catholic friend recently, "a mere glossing over of sin, a lazy man's method of getting his punishment remitted instead of the normal time-



honored method of repentance and amendment? I do not see any need for indulgences," he continued, "as long as Christ has pointed to repentance as the way back to His love and friendship. 'Much is forgiven her because she hath loved much. Go now and sin no more.' This was the burden of Christ's message to mankind. It seems to me that indulgences are morally unwholesome because they lessen the need for such interior repentance and amendment."

Such is the common view of our non-Catholic friends. It overlooks, however, an essential condition for the gaining of an indulgence. For the latter is not a glossing over of sin. It does not touch the guilt of sin in any way. In fact, an indulgence cannot be gained unless the guilt of mortal sin has been first removed by the sacrament of penance, of which true interior contrition and purpose of amendment are indispensable requisites. Therefore an indulgence can be gained only by a person who is already in the friendship and love of God.

Instead of lessening the need for genuine repentance and amendment, indulgences emphasize their imperative necessity. For without such repentance there can be no indulgences, and no forgiveness of sin, either by the Church through the sacrament of penance or directly by God. No person or institution in the world insists more strongly upon the unescapable necessity of genuine and not feigned repentance for the obtaining of forgiveness of sin than the Catholic Church. The picture, then, of a man wallowing in the mire of sin and gaining an indulgence through the offering of an alms to spare himself the trouble of repentance and amendment, does not reflect the teaching of the Catholic Church. It exists only in the imagination of our separated brethren, and is traceable to the wide-spread misrepresentation of the nature of an indulgence.

#### *No Forgiveness of Guilt*

Do not some writs of indulgence, however, especially of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, contain the expression "from guilt and punishment" (*a culpa et a poena*)? Does this not show that an indulgence was regarded as a pardon of sin? It is true that this mediæval formula was often used, though rarely by the Roman chancery. But it

was never used in the sense ascribed to it by Protestant writers, as meaning the remission of the guilt of sin through an indulgence. Addressed to Catholics who understood the meaning of an indulgence, the formula always implied the previous remission of the guilt of sin through the sacrament of penance.

In order that I may not appear to be asking our non-Catholic reader to accept this explanation on my authority, I shall cite the words of a contemporary of Luther. While I have before me the writings of over a dozen authors of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries explaining the writs of indulgences in the sense just mentioned, I shall quote but one, allowing him to speak for all. I choose John of Palts, for the threefold reason that he was authorized to preach the Jubilee indulgence under Pope Alexander VII, because he was a fellow religious of Luther, and because his explanation is accepted as correct even by Brieger, one of the most hostile of all Protestant writers on the question of indulgences.

"Properly speaking," writes Palts, "in virtue of an indulgence no one is ever absolved from punishment and guilt, but from punishment only. However, it is commonly said that during the Jubilee one is absolved from both—a *poena et culpa*. And that saying is true, because a Jubilee is more than a mere indulgence; it includes authority to confess and absolve and together with this power to remit punishment by way of indulgence. In this way it includes the sacrament of penance and together with it an indulgence properly so-called. For the clearer understanding of the aforesaid, it must be noted that the term indulgence may be taken in one of two ways. In one way, in so far as it properly signifies the mere remission of punishment, and in this sense it does not imply the remission of guilt; and in another way, in as much as in a wider sense it stands for the Jubilee, or for the letter including the Jubilee, and then it extends itself to the remission of sin. And the reason is that usually when the Pope grants a Jubilee, he does not concede a simple indulgence, but also the faculty of confessing and absolving from all sins. And in this way the guilt is taken away by the sacrament of penance, which there intervenes; while the

punishment is cancelled by the indulgence, which is there granted."<sup>1</sup>

The alleged sale of indulgences, the numerous abuses which grew up around them, and their bearing upon the religious upheaval of the sixteenth century are questions which demand fuller treatment than is possible within the limits of this chapter.

Suffice it to say here that the doctrine of indulgences while perhaps not explicit in holy Scripture is at least implicit therein. It is likewise in accordance with reason. Far from being subversive of true repentance and purpose of amendment, it stimulates the arousal of these subjective dispositions by stressing their necessity for the gaining of an indulgence.

#### *An Incentive to Virtue*

The official teaching of the Church on the subject is thus expressed by the Council of Trent: "Since," says the Council, "the power of conferring Indulgences was granted by Christ to the Church, and she has, even in the most ancient times, used this kind of power, delivered unto her of God; the Sacred Holy Synod teaches and enjoins that the use of Indulgences, for the Christian people most salutary and approved of by the authority of Sacred Councils, is to be retained in the Church; and it condemns, with anathema, those who either assert they are useless, or who deny that there is in the Church the power of granting them."<sup>2</sup>

It is to be noted how moderate and restrained is the official statement of the Church's teaching. It simply affirms two truths, namely, that the Church has the power to grant indulgences, and that their use is salutary. Thus it is evident that the Church does not crowd them upon any of her children. If one will appraise the doctrine of indulgences, not as caricatured by her enemies but as actually taught by the Church, he will come, I think, to the two following conclusions:

1. Indulgences constitute a powerful incentive to deeds of virtue, piety, and charity, quickening man in his love of God and in his service to his fellow man.

<sup>1</sup>Brieger, p. 82.  
<sup>2</sup>Sec. XXV.

2. Indulgences are a beautiful dispensation of Divine Providence emphasizing the social solidarity of our race and binding us all together as members of the mystical body of Christ by the golden ties of love and prayer.

We do not struggle as solitary lonely wayfarers, climbing slowly up life's rough mountainside, with no one to cheer or help us when we falter on the way. We travel as pilgrims in a goodly company, and as soldiers in a mighty army, with the hands of angels stretched down to help us when we stumble, with the prayers of the faithful pleading for us before the Throne of the Most High, and with the sacrifices and good deeds of our brothers-in-arms to hearten us when we weary on the way. The gaining of indulgences for one another is, therefore, but an integral part of that consoling doctrine of the communion of saints, the sweet reasonableness of which is so beautifully portrayed in the words of Tennyson:

"For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If knowing God they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friends?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

#### Discussion Aids

Define an indulgence. What two-fold penalty is attached to every grievous sin? Make very clear what you mean by "temporal punishment." Which penalty is always removed by a good confession? Which penalty may or may not be so removed? If temporal punishment is not removed by confession how may it be removed? What temporal punishment was suffered by Moses? By David? How do you know that the Church has the power to remit temporal punishment? What two kinds of indulgences are there? Is a transfer of indulgences sometimes possible? Explain (1) The Communion of Saints; (2) Vicarious satisfaction; (3) The Spiritual Treasury of the Church. Explain the difference in

the application of indulgences to the living and to the dead. Explain what is necessary for the gaining of an indulgence. Explain how the gaining of indulgences for one another is a part of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

*Practices:*

Direct your intention every day to gaining as many indulgences as you can.

Read the Scriptures for fifteen minutes daily, you thereby gain an indulgence.

Make the Sign of the Cross with holy water; you thereby gain an indulgence.

## Chapter XVIII

### THE REAL PRESENCE: FACT OR FICTION?

#### *How Christ Answered An Ever Recurring Question of Today*

"Do you not have to be born a Catholic to be able to believe that Jesus Christ is really and substantially present in Holy Communion?" queried a doctor of the writer recently. "It seems to me," he added, "that it is so hard to believe that Christ is really present beneath the appearance of a Eucharistic wafer, that I cannot imagine a person believing such a doctrine unless it were inculcated into his mind as a little child and he were thus brought up in such a belief from the days when his reasoning powers were just beginning to unfold." The doctor stated thus frankly a view of many non-Catholics concerning belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. By way of reply, let us simply ask our separated friends to examine the evidence in the matter for themselves.

It is the traditional policy of the Catholic Church to ask her children to accept a doctrine only when there is sufficient and compelling evidence of its truthfulness. Is the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist an exception to this general rule? Does she secure its acceptance, as the doctor implied, only by foisting it upon the uncritical minds of little children when they are unable to reason for themselves? In answering this inquiry all that the writer would ask of his dear non-Catholic readers would be the favor of an *open* mind—looking squarely at the facts in the case and framing their decisions in accordance with the weight of the evidence.

Belief in the Real Presence does not rest upon the reasoning or the decision of any priest, bishop, pontiff, or council, but upon the words of Jesus Christ Himself. Is the presentation of the doctrine by our divine Saviour vague and equivocal, or is it clear and unmistakable? While all the



teachings of Christ are set forth in clear and simple terms, I think it can be safely affirmed that nowhere in the Scriptures is there to be found a presentation of a doctrine with greater clarity or with more painstaking effort to remove all uncertainty than that which characterizes the divine Master's exposition of the Holy Eucharist, as recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel and in the Gospel narrative of the Last Supper. The student of pedagogy will find in it a model of skillful exposition of subject matter and a revelation of keen insight into the successive stage of the learning process. The exposition may be divided into four stages:

#### *The Preparation*

The first is the stage of preparation. Like the wise teacher that He was, Christ first prepared the minds of His hearers for the suitable reception of the great teaching He was about to impart to them. Accordingly He allowed a multitude to follow Him into a mountain to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee. There He worked the tremendous miracle of multiplying five barley loaves and two fishes to such an extent that His disciples were able to feed the multitude of five thousand men together with their wives and children. After they had partaken, the disciples gathered up twelve baskets of the fragments.

One can well imagine the profound impression made upon the people by this manifestation of supernatural power. Actions constitute the one universal Esperanto, the one language understood by all mankind. In this unmistakable language did the Master present the credentials of His divine power and authority. It was in no spirit of mere ostentation that the Saviour worked this miracle. It was for the special purpose of convincing the people of His divine power and thereby preparing their minds for the reception of the great doctrine of the Holy Eucharist.

Shortly after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, Christ performs another one, that of walking upon the Sea of Galilee, and entering the boat of the Apostles which was then "twenty or thirty furlongs" from the shore. These two miracles served admirably to prepare the minds of the people for the sublime doctrine He was about to present to them.

#### *The Promise*

The second is the stage of the promise. Jesus utilizes the two previous miracles to inculcate the necessity of belief in Him. Thus when the Jews asked: "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered: "This is the work of God, that you *believe* in Him Whom He hath sent."<sup>1</sup>

In leading up to the promise that Jesus is about to make to them, He refers by way of contrast to the manna which their fathers received during their journey across the desert. "I am the bread of life," He says, "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." Now note how after pointing out the superiority of the bread which He is about to give them over the manna rained down from heaven upon their fathers, Christ proceeds at once to tell them what that bread is: "And the bread," He says, "that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world."<sup>2</sup>

Did the Jews understand Christ to speak figuratively or literally when He made this great promise? That they understood Jesus to speak literally is unmistakably evident from their immediate response: "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"

Now, if Christ wished to be understood in a figurative manner, it would have been His duty not only as the Son of God, but even as an honest Teacher, to correct the Jews and say to them: "You misunderstand me. You think that I am referring to my flesh, whereas I am speaking figuratively and am referring only to a symbol." Is that actually what Christ does? Let St. John make answer: "Then Jesus said to them: Amen, Amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you."<sup>3</sup>

#### *More Emphatic*

It is to be observed that Jesus now speaks more em-

<sup>1</sup>John 6:28-29.

<sup>2</sup>John 6:48-52.

<sup>3</sup>John 6:54.

phatically than ever. The use of the double expletive, "Amen, Amen," indicates that the words which follow are of especial moment. Instead of softening His statement, He increases its vigor to the extent of declaring their deliberate refusal to accept His great gift will rob them of eternal life.

Then without pause, Christ restates His teaching in the plainest and simplest terms, so that it would seem almost impossible for even the slowest witted auditor in the crowd to fail to perceive His meaning. Thus He says: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him." It will be noted that in each of the four consecutive sentences, Jesus uses the double phrase "to eat my flesh and drink my blood." Even to the extent of what might seem to some as wearisome repetition, the Master exhausts all the possibility of human language in making His meaning unmistakably clear. He evidently wishes to place it forever beyond dispute.

Jesus follows the exposition of the gift He is soon to bestow upon them, by revealing His loving purpose, saying that he who does this "abides in me and I in him." It is a pledge of the intimate union of the soul of the creature with its God. Then the Master reminds them of His divine power and authority, saying: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me."

#### *A Hard Doctrine*

But human nature does not always bend its stiff neck to accept the yoke of a doctrine, no matter how sweet and light, and no matter how overwhelming the authority from which it emanates. This doctrine involved a mystery. In spite of all the clarity with which it had been presented, in spite even of the divine authority of the Teacher, it staggered some who apparently did not wish to accept any doctrine which they could not understand from center to circumference. St. John discloses that some of the disciples demurred at the acceptance of the doctrine just presented by the Master. "Many therefore of his disciples," he says, "hearing it, said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" A little

later he reports: "After this many of his disciples went back; and walked no more with him."

When Jesus heard them say that it was a hard doctrine, did He offer to soften it by stripping it of its mystery, pulling it from the infinite reaches of the supernatural to the realm of the merely natural, and bringing it in its entirety within the compass of their finite intelligence? When He saw the disciples whom He loved, and for whose salvation He had become incarnate, leaving Him, did he call to them?—"Come back and I will alter the doctrine. I will promise to give you not really my flesh and blood but only a symbol, a reminder of me. I will take from it all the elements of supernatural mystery and eliminate all necessity of your making an act of faith in the truth I am proclaiming to you."

Not thus did Jesus speak. Not thus did He act. Instead, He turned to His own chosen twelve, with the words: "Will you also go away?" He was willing to allow His own Apostles to leave Him rather than soften or modify in any way the great teaching and the great promise which He had just presented to them. Peter answered with the memorable words, instinct with unwavering faith: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Thus concludes the stage of the promise.

#### *The Promise Fulfilled*

The third stage is the fulfillment of the promise, the institution of the Holy Eucharist. The Saviour waits for about a year, until there arrives an occasion which is most suitable for the realization of His promise. It is the occasion of His last supper with them, the night before He died. The Master gathers His Apostles about Him to receive His last will and testament. The occasion is one of unusual solemnity. The circumstances, touching and memorable, constitute an impressive frame for the epochal words of the Saviour. Let St. Matthew describe the scene which then occurred: "And while they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke and gave to His disciples and said: Take ye and eat. This is my body. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins."<sup>1</sup>

Notice how literally Christ fulfills His promise to them. Note how admirably the words of institution dovetail into the words of promise and form the concluding link in a carefully arranged chain. Observe how clearly and simply Christ speaks: This is my body; this is my blood. What words could be plainer? What more could even an Omnipotent Being have done to have insured the utmost clarity in presenting His doctrine? It would seem that Christ had exhausted every means of setting forth His teaching in the clearest and most unmistakable terms.

The question now arises: How did the Apostles understand Jesus to speak? They who were within the sound of His voice, they who understood and spoke the same language as the Master, surely they are better calculated to understand the meaning of Christ's words to them, than critics who are separated by a chasm of nineteen hundred years, and who do not understand the language with the intimacy and the accuracy of those to whom it was their vernacular—their familiar daily speech.

#### *The Application*

To answer this question we have but to ascertain how the Apostles applied His teaching in their ministry. This may be said to be the fourth and final stage—the translation of a teaching into actual practice. Did the Apostles bless and distribute merely bread and wine, or did they administer what they believed to be the body and blood of Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine? If they professed to distribute merely a symbol or reminder of the Saviour's flesh and blood, then the Catholic interpretation falls to the ground. If on the other hand, the Apostles proclaimed that they were dispensing the body and blood of the Saviour, and were doing so at His express command; then every fair-minded person will surely be compelled to acknowledge that the Catholic interpretation is that of the Apostles and of Christ, and alone is tenable.

Let St. Paul answer for the Apostles. About eight years after St. Matthew wrote his Gospel, St. Paul wrote a letter to the Christian community at Corinth, in which he reminds them: "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?"

For, I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, brake it, and said: Take and eat: this is My body which shall be delivered for you. This do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice, after the supper, saying: This cup is the New Covenant in My blood. This do ye, as often as ye shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For, as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye shall show the death of the Lord until He come. Therefore, whoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, *shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord.* But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For, he who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, *not discerning the body of the Lord.*"<sup>1</sup>

In these words, St. Paul expressed clearly and unequivocally the faith of the Apostles and of the infant Church in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Mark how he charges the person who receives the sacrament unworthily with the guilt "of the body and blood of the Lord." But how could a person be guilty of so heinous a crime, if he had merely eaten a little bread and drunk a little wine? Surely one cannot be charged with the crime of homicide if he does violence merely to the picture or statue of a man, and does not touch the man himself. St. Paul's solemn admonition would be therefore utterly meaningless if the person receiving the sacrament did not really receive the body and blood of Christ.

#### *Voice of Antiquity*

"Plain and simple reason," observes Cardinal Wiseman, "seems to tell us that the presence of Christ's body is necessary for an offence committed against it. A man cannot be 'guilty of majesty,' unless the majesty exists in the object against which his crime is committed. In like manner, an offender against the Blessed Eucharist cannot be described as guilty of Christ's Body and Blood, if these be not in the Sacrament."<sup>2</sup>

The interpretation of St. Paul but reflects the unanimous

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 10:16 and 11:23-29.

<sup>2</sup> Lectures on the Real Presence p. 312.



teaching of the Fathers and Doctors of the early Church. Space will permit the testimony of but one of the Fathers, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who wrote in the fourth century as follows: "As a life-giving Sacrament we possess the sacred Flesh of Christ and His Precious Blood under the appearances of bread and wine."<sup>1</sup> "What seems to be bread is not bread, but Christ's Body; what seems to be wine is not wine, but Christ's Blood."<sup>2</sup>

A further guide to the belief of the early Church is found in the method of administering this Sacrament. The custom of receiving Holy Communion while fasting dates from the early centuries of the Christian era. Upon administering the sacred Host the celebrant said: "The Body of the Lord," and the communicant answered: "Amen." Receiving the Host into his hands he placed it at once in his mouth. The deacon then offered the chalice, saying: "The Blood of the Lord." The communicant drank from it after having replied: "Amen." The faithful were instructed to exercise the greatest care lest any of the sacred species fall to the ground because it was the Body of the Saviour.

It was the common practice to bring the sacred Host to the sick and to prisoners. If persecution made the task too dangerous for deacons, even children would be permitted to discharge the sacred mission rather than allow Christians to die without receiving their heavenly Food. It was while on such an errand that the little boy, Tarcisius, was set upon by persecutors of the Christians and beaten to death. Upon the tomb of the martyred youth, Pope St. Damasus inscribed the epitaph: "He preferred to yield his soul in death, than to betray the heavenly members (of Christ) to raving dogs." Do men and even little children risk injury and even death itself to protect a mere piece of bread? To ask the question is to answer it. In the inscription upon the tomb of St. Tarcisius the belief of the infant Church in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist shines forth more luminously than in a ton of theoretical arguments.

Such was the faith not only of the Apostles and of the early Church, but such remains to this day after the lapse of nineteen centuries, the faith of all branches of Christianity

<sup>1</sup>In *Luz.* xxi. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Cath., IV, 9.

save only Protestantism, which appeared upon the scene only in the sixteenth century. For the Greek Church which seceded from the Catholic Church about a thousand years ago, the present Russian Church, the schismatic Copts, Armenians, Syrians, Chaldeans and in fact all the Oriental sects, even though no longer in communion with the see of Rome, still hold fast to the teaching of Christ and the belief of His Apostles in the real presence of the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

#### *Under One Form*

"Why do you give Communion to the laity," asked an inquirer recently, "under the form of bread and not under the form of wine as well?" The fact is, contrary to the assumption underlying the above question, that Christ is present whole and entire, both under the form of bread and under the form of wine. Christ clearly taught this when He said: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."<sup>1</sup> St. Paul plainly taught the same truth when he wrote to the Corinthians: "Whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> While it was the common custom for the first twelve centuries to give Communion under both kinds, the concurrent practice of administering the Holy Eucharist under either kind had likewise the approval of the Church.

The present law of giving Communion to the laity only under the form of bread dates from the Council of Constance, in 1414, which condemned the contention of the Hussites of Bohemia that the cup was absolutely necessary. The Council of Trent confirming the law, declared: "Laymen and clerics when not celebrating are not obliged by any divine precept to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist under both kinds, neither can it by any means be doubted, without injury to faith, that Communion under either kind is sufficient for them unto salvation."<sup>3</sup>

Long before the present law was enacted, the custom of receiving under the form of bread alone had become widespread for practical reasons. These "grave and just reasons" enumerated by the Council of Trent, were: The danger of

<sup>1</sup>John 6:52.

<sup>2</sup>1 Cor. 11:27.

<sup>3</sup>Sess. 21, Ch. 1.

spilling the Precious Blood; the difficulty of reserving the Sacrament under the species of wine; and the danger to health from partaking of a chalice touched by infected lips. As the question involves merely discipline, the Church exercises her right as the guardian of the Sacraments to adapt her methods of administering them to the changing condition of the times.

#### *A Simple Analogy*

Let me now prescind from the detailed intricacies of textual analysis and interpretation and address in a kindly manner to my dear non-Catholic reader the following simple analogy, which seems to me to go to the heart of the matter. A father who has a large farm with barns, cattle, machinery, and all the equipment of a well-organized farm, has often promised his children to bequeath it all to them upon his death. "It will be," he says, "a manifestation of the love I bear for you, my children. I will leave you better provided for than I was when starting out as a young man."

A fatal illness falls upon the father. The doctor assures him that he has but a few hours more to live. Accordingly the father calls his children to his bedside. "I want to make known to you," he says, "my last will and testament." The children recall his oft-repeated promise to give to them his farm with all its equipment. At this point, however, the father reaches behind his pillow and draws therefrom a picture of his farm. "This," he says, "is what I leave to you—a picture of my farm. It will be a symbol, a reminder of me."

Can you not imagine the expressions of amazement on the faces of the children as they listen to such strange words fall from their father's lips? Would they not say: "Surely, father must be suffering from hallucinations, his mind must be in a delirium. Otherwise, he would not utter as his farewell to us, words which make a hollow mockery out of all that he has spoken to us. If he were in his right mind, surely he would not taunt and mock us by bequeathing to us not the reality which he promised, but merely an empty symbol of it—a hollow worthless shell."

Do not those who say that in the Lord's Supper, Christ gave us not what He promised, not His real body and blood, but merely a symbol of it, merely a piece of bread and a little wine to remind us of Him, do they not attribute to Christ

the same preposterous mockery which characterized the conduct of the dying farmer? Do they not reduce the Saviour to the status of an archdeceiver? Yes, worse than that. They portray Him as lifting up the hearts and hopes of His hearers by promising them the greatest possible gift, insisting upon their believing in His promise, and then dashing to the ground all their fond expectations and crushing their trust in Him by making a cruel jest of it all. Such a conception would not only undermine the moral character of Jesus, but it would destroy the possibility of believing in the religion of which He was the Founder. The consideration goes to show how the belief in the Real Presence is intimately linked up with the veracity of Jesus and His whole moral character as well as with the validity and trustworthiness of the religion which He commanded mankind to accept in His name and on His authority.

#### *The Real Reasons*

Is it not evident, therefore, to every fair-minded reader who faces the facts honestly and squarely, that the Scriptures show that Christ taught the doctrine of the real presence clearly and unmistakably? Is it not evident that the Catholic in accepting this doctrine is simply manifesting his faith in the veracity and teaching authority of Jesus Christ? Why then is it that the majority of Protestant Christians do not accept the doctrine despite the clarity with which it is taught by the Saviour? In the writer's judgment one of the important reasons is because the divinity of Christ and His authority as an infallible teacher are no longer held by vast sections of Protestantism. Another is because it involves a mystery and is beyond the capacity of the human mind fully to comprehend. And mysteries and the supernatural are unpalatable to many non-Catholics today. A further reason is because environment and rearing have closed their minds against such a doctrine, and they have never taken the pains to investigate for themselves.

The question, however, that is most difficult to answer is: How can people who call themselves Christians and still profess to believe in the divinity of Christ, deny that which Jesus Christ taught in the clearest terms, namely, the doctrine of the Real Presence? It is easy enough to understand how the agnostic, though mistaken, can deny the doctrine because of

his denial of the divinity of Christ. But how a Christian who professes to believe in the teaching authority of Christ can deny His plain teaching concerning the Real Presence is indeed difficult to understand.

For 1500 years all Christendom was united in the literal understanding of the Saviour's words. In the sixteenth century it became the fashion to give new and arbitrary interpretations to passages in the Scriptures in accordance with one's private whim and fancy. The amount of religious anarchy and confusion which was brought about by this practice is evident from the fact that within seventy-five years over 200 different interpretations were given to the clear, simple words of Christ: "This is my body." At Ingolstadt in 1577 Christopher Rasperger wrote a whole book entitled "Two Hundred Interpretations of the words: 'This is My Body.'" It shows how hard pressed the founders of the new sects were to defend their arbitrary interpretations.

Till his death Luther defended the literal interpretation against such innovators as Zwingli, Carlstadt, and Oecolampadius, though with characteristic ill logic; he warred against the sacrifice of the Mass. Indeed he confesses that he was tempted to deny the Real Presence in order "to give a great smack in the face of Popery," but the words of Christ in the Scriptures and the voices of antiquity were too overwhelming in its favor. Thus in a letter to the Christians of Strasbourg, written in 1524, he acknowledged that the plain natural meaning of the words was so clear and forceful as to admit of no escape. "I am caught," he wrote, "I cannot escape, the text is too forcible."<sup>1</sup>

#### *A Fair Conclusion*

It is moreover a law of interpretation, universally recognized by scholars, that a passage is always to be construed in its obvious meaning unless there is some good reason for interpreting it figuratively. But the words of Christ "to eat my flesh, and drink my blood," cannot be interpreted figuratively without doing violence to the whole passage. Why? Because this phrase when interpreted figuratively has a meaning which is totally repugnant to the whole context. Thus, the phrase, "to eat the flesh and drink the blood," when

<sup>1</sup>De Wette, II, 577.

used figuratively among the Jews, as among the Arabs of today, meant to inflict upon a person some serious injury, especially by calumny or by false accusation. To interpret the phrase figuratively then would be to make Our Lord promise life everlasting to the culprit for slandering and hating Him, which would reduce the whole passage to utter nonsense.

Unless the words of Christ concerning the Holy Eucharist are taken at their face value in their plain literal meaning, they become meaningless and incoherent. Yes, worse than that, Christ would be an Archdeceiver! For He allowed and encouraged and even insisted upon the disciples understanding Him in a literal manner when according to the non-Catholic view, He was speaking in a purely figurative manner. True, the words of Christ involve a mystery, a truth far beyond our capacity fully to understand. But the Trinity and the Incarnation are likewise mysteries. We do not on that account, however, assign them to the scrap heap. We believe them on the authority of Christ, the Revealer. The Christian religion would not long survive if every doctrine involving a mystery were to be discarded. Science as well as human life are filled with mysteries. Why should religion be the solitary exception?

May we not believe then that the fair-minded reader, who has followed honestly and squarely the evidence thus far presented, will feel compelled both by the weight of the evidence and by the laws of logic to agree with the following reasonable conclusion? The Scriptures show that Christ taught the doctrine of the Real Presence. In accepting that teaching, Catholics are but loyal to Jesus Christ. To fail to do so, would be to flout the authority of Jesus, and to undermine the whole basis of the Christian faith. In a world where sects shrug their shoulders and say: "This is a hard saying and who can hear it?" and proceed to walk away, the Church answers the query, "Will you also go away?" which Christ now addresses to her as He did to the Apostles of old, by making her own the memorable reply of Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."



### Discussion Aids

Name two of Christ's miracles that were a preparation for the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist. What promise did Christ make in regard to the Holy Eucharist? Did Christ's followers think that He was using figurative language? How did Christ emphasize the fact that His words were to be taken literally? How was Christ's promise received by the disciples? Who answered for those who received the promise with faith and what did that spokesman say? When did Christ fulfill His promise that He would give Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist? Discuss the details of this fulfillment. Show that the Apostles administered this sacrament as the Body and Blood of Christ, quoting St. Paul. What was the teaching of the Fathers and Doctors of the early Church? Describe an early method of administering this sacrament. Tell the story of the boy Tarcisius. Why do the laity receive only under the form of bread? How old is this law? What happened to the doctrine of the Real Presence at the time of the Reformation? How many interpretations of the text "This is My Body" had resulted by 1577? Sum up the case for the doctrine of the Real Presence.

#### *Practices:*

Receive Christ in the Holy Eucharist as often as you can, daily if possible.

Make frequent visits to Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

Adopt a special Eucharistic devotion,—reception of Holy Communion on the first Friday, frequent attendance at Benediction, etc.

### Chapter XIX

## THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND REASON

### *How Science and Reason Harmonize With Faith*

An outstanding characteristic of the present day is the emphasis it places upon the appeal to reason. Of doctrines proposed for the belief of Protestants up until the last half-century or so, the questions were first asked: Is the doctrine based upon the Bible? Has it the authority of the inspired word of God behind it? These were the primary criteria by which former generations of Protestants tested the orthodoxy of articles proposed for their belief. The present generation shows little inclination to test the validity of doctrines in the light of such traditional standards.

For belief in both the inspired character and in the inerrancy of Holy Writ has waned very markedly among our non-Catholic fellow citizens. Private interpretation of scripture has brought such a conflicting variety of opinions into the world as to cause religious chaos and anarchy, and to leave little taste in the average person for wordy controversies over the meaning of Scriptural texts. Still less is his interest in tradition. In fact, many seem to find it unpalatable to be asked to keep step in religious matters with the Fathers of the early Church. They seem to think that progress implies that they should have outgrown the naive and primitive conceptions of the Christians of the early and medieval Church.

Instead of such former criteria, the present generation asks: Is the doctrine reasonable? Does it harmonize with the scientific knowledge and the enlightened intelligence of the present day? Or does the doctrine ask us to believe something that runs counter to the rational temper of the day simply because it has its roots in the Bible or in ancient traditions?

We have previously shown the doctrine of the Real Pres-

ence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist to be based upon the words of Christ as recorded in the Scriptures, and to be backed by the whole weight of Christian tradition. Can we show that this is likewise in harmony with the scientific knowledge and the enlightened intelligence of our day? "No," say many non-Catholics, "regardless of what the Bible or tradition may say, the doctrine runs directly contrary to reason and to the scientific temper of our day." Thus Dr. E. W. Barnes, the Episcopalian Bishop of Birmingham, England, recently shocked the Christian world by referring to the belief in the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ as a superstition, smacking of magic and totally untenable in the light of our present day science.

#### *Contrary to Reason?*

Let me ask my dear non-Catholic reader to examine with an open mind the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, and see for himself if there be anything unreasonable in this cardinal tenet of the Catholic faith. In the first place, let it be frankly acknowledged that the doctrine involves a mystery. Like the doctrine of the Trinity and of the Incarnation, it too transcends the capacity of the human mind fully to understand. It is a truth, however, not against reason but above it. In other words, as far as reason can go in fathoming the truth, it can find no element of contradiction or repugnance.

The doctrine says in brief that when the words of consecration, "This is my body. This is my blood," are pronounced, the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. This change is effected by the power of God, exercised through the agency of his ambassador, a duly ordained priest. How it is done, we do not know. That it is done, we believe on the authority of Christ Himself.

In believing that Almighty God can effect such a change, there is nothing unreasonable. God can create and He can annihilate. This change of one substance into another, called by the Catholic Church *transubstantiation*, involves no power not implicit in the dual power of creation and annihilation. And all Christians admit that Almighty God possesses such dual power. Moreover, the Christian who reads his New Testament attentively will find in it an instance of a trans-

formation that approaches closely to transubstantiation. For St. John tells us that at the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee, Christ miraculously changed the water into wine.<sup>1</sup> What was this but a kind of transubstantiation? Furthermore, the multiplication of five barley loaves and two fish into such a quantity as to enable the disciples to feed five thousand men together with their wives and children is a miracle of the same generic character as that of transubstantiation.

#### *A Contradiction?*

An objection is raised. "The doctrine of the Holy Eucharist is impossible," wrote a non-Catholic friend, "because it involves a self-contradiction. It implies that the same thing is both bread and not bread at the same time. The Eucharist is claimed to be both bread and flesh at one and the same time. This violates the most fundamental law of reason and of common sense."

Like many other objections to the Catholic faith, this too is traceable to a misunderstanding of what the Church really teaches. The doctrine of the Eucharist implies that after the consecration is pronounced, the substance of bread is no longer really bread, but has been changed into the substance of Christ's body. What has not been changed are the outward appearances of the bread, that is, its color, size, shape, taste, weight—in short, what is apparent to the senses. The reality of a thing lies, however, not in its accidents, or visible parts, but in the substance which is beneath the surface. How different in appearances in all that pertain to the senses are steam, water, and ice? Yet they all constitute the same substance, the same elements.

In the Eucharist the substance of Christ's body has none of the sensible qualities or appearances of a human body. Consequently it would be incorrect to say: "The body of Christ is long or round, or has a light color." It is not extended in such a way as to occupy space, although it is united to the appearances or sensible qualities of the bread in the Holy Eucharist. It is true that this involves a mystery. It is not against our reason but above it. A striking analogy can be found, however, in the manner in which the human soul, a spiritual substance, is present in the body. The soul, like all

spiritual beings, has no extension. Yet it animates the body which occupies space.

#### *Present Like Soul*

Father Dalgairns thus develops the comparison: "This then is what God has done to the Body of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. It has ceased to be extended, and all at once it is freed from the fetters which bound it to place. It is not so much that it is in many places at once, as that it is no longer under the ordinary laws of space at all. It pervades the Host like a spirit. It uses, indeed, the locality formerly occupied by the bread, in order to fix itself in a definite place, but it only comes into the domain of space at all indirectly through the species, as the soul only enters into its present relations with space through the body. Who will say that this involves contradiction, or that it is beyond the power of Omnipotence?"<sup>1</sup>

Hence it is obvious that the presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist is not to be interpreted in so gross a manner as to imagine that the head is in one part of the sacred Host and the limbs in another part. Christ is present, whole and entire, in every particle of the sacred Host. The human soul likewise is confined to no part of the body, but is present in every part. The manner in which Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist while unique, is therefore somewhat similar to the manner in which the soul is present in the body. It is incorrect then to think that, by breaking the sacred Host into several parts, the body of Jesus would be mangled or dissevered in any way.

#### *Substance—A Mystery*

While confessing that we are here face to face with a mystery, it is well to point out that what substance really is, is likewise a mystery to philosophers and to scientists as well. What are the ultimate constituents of matter, and what is their nature? Such distinguished scientists as Millikan, Pupin, Eddington, and Jeans confess that the answer has so far eluded the most penetrating and persistent investigations of science. A whole new sub-atomic world of marvelous mystery has been discovered. The atom has been broken up into proton and electron. The whole concept of matter has been

<sup>1</sup>The Holy Communion, I, 24, 24.

revolutionized. Instead of matter consisting of hard, inert pellets, as the man in the street still imagines, science has shown these infinitesimal constituents of matter to be in a state of tremendous activity.

The atom is viewed as a small solar system. Around its central nucleus of positive electricity called a proton, the electrons revolve as the planets revolve about the sun. The movements, however, apparently follow no fixed path or orbit. While the atom is so small as to be invisible to the naked eye, science has measured the speed of these electrons and tells us that they move in an orbit of less than one-millionth of an inch in diameter—faster than an airplane or a bullet from a revolver. Thus the average electron revolves around its central nucleus several thousand million million times every second, with a velocity of hundreds of miles a second. This amazing orbital speed which is greater than that of the planets or even of the stars, is achieved in spite of the infinitesimally small chamber in which it is imprisoned—namely less than one-millionth of an inch in diameter.

If this statement, which modern physics assures us has been thoroughly verified, were announced to the people living only half a century ago, would they not have laughed it out of court, as ridiculous, absurd, and impossible? Would they not have protested that such an occurrence would constitute a miracle, greater even than that of transubstantiation? Would they not have exclaimed like the Jews of old: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?"

#### *New Concept of Matter*

I mention a few of the amazing discoveries of modern physics to show how unwise it is for an individual to play the role of King Canute and set limits to the power of Almighty God, by saying, "Thus far, and no farther can His power go." Thus at the very time when Bishop Barnes was shocking England by proclaiming that transubstantiation was outmoded by the advance of modern science, physicists were at work in their laboratories changing one chemical element into an altogether different one. They were consigning to the scientific scrap heap the two fundamental laws of the older physics, namely, the laws of the conservation of matter and energy. Thus, Sir James Jeans declared in 1929: "The two



fundamental cornerstones of twentieth century physics, the conservation of matter and the conservation of energy, are both abolished."<sup>1</sup>

The theory which has gained general acceptance among physicists, and which completely revolutionizes the traditional conception of matter, is that the whole universe is composed of only two kinds of ultimate bricks, namely, electrons and protons. These are but the names for positive and negative electricity. Furthermore the differences between all the elements is but a difference in the nuclear structure and in the number of electrons within the atomic cell.

Thus Dr. Jacob Kunz, Professor of Mathematical Physics at the University of Illinois, and an eminent authority in his field, informs me that scientists have already modified the nuclear structure of the atomic cell and have thus produced one element from another. By bombarding the proton in an atom of beryllium with alpha particles, Dr. Kunz states, a rearrangement of the nuclear structure was effected, producing therefrom the altogether different element of hydrogen. This has been done likewise with aluminum, phosphorus, and other elements. The alpha particles travel at an amazing velocity, varying from 12,800 miles a second to the slowest at 8,800 miles a second.

If, then, scientists with merely human ingenuity and human power can effect a kind of transubstantiation, who will be so presumptuous and so rash as to deny that power to Almighty God? Who will say now that there is any contradiction or repugnance implied in the change of one element into another? In the light of the amazing discoveries of modern science, men are much less cocksure in proclaiming that such a thing is impossible than they were even at the beginning of the present century.

#### *A Mystery—Still*

Science asks us to believe as literal facts statements which no amount of reasoning could have induced the previous generation to accept. What a world of almost infinite potentialities are locked up in a small particle of matter awaiting the skillful hand to release them from their thrall-dom! Consider the energy stored up in a piece of coal smaller

<sup>1</sup>The Universe Around Us, p. 178.

than a pea. Jeans states it as a scientific fact that if all the atomic energy locked up in so tiny a piece of coal could be released, it would be sufficient to take the *Mauritania*, one of the largest ships afloat, across the Atlantic and back again! "If the energy in a single pound of coal could be completely utilized, it would be sufficient to keep the whole British nation going for a fortnight, domestic fires, factories, trains, power stations, ships and all."<sup>1</sup> Indeed the traditional conception of matter has been revolutionized by the discoveries of modern science. "When we compare the universe as it is now supposed to be," observes the distinguished scientist, A. S. Eddington of the University of Cambridge, "with the universe as we had ordinarily preconceived it, the most arresting change is not the rearrangement of space and time by Einstein but the dissolution of all that we regard as most solid into tiny specks floating in void. That gives an abrupt jar to those who think that things are more or less what they seem. The revelation by modern physics of the void within the atom is more disturbing than the revelation by astronomy of the immense void of interstellar space. The atom is as porous as the solar system. If we eliminated all the unfilled space in a man's body and collected his protons and electrons into one mass, the man would be reduced to a speck just visible with a magnifying glass."<sup>2</sup>

This means that the human body which we naively imagine is a solid mass of matter measuring about six feet in height and weighing about 175 pounds consists in sober scientific reality chiefly of gaps, crevices and fields of force, empty save for infinitesimal particles which, if packed all together, would constitute so small a speck of matter as to be invisible to the naked eye. This, I hasten to add, is not a selection from *Alice in Wonderland*, but a page from one of the universally accepted texts in modern physics. These discoveries of modern science shove back the frontiers of the possible far beyond the horizon glimpsed by any previous generation. They open a doorway to a world of almost limitless possibilities. They show, too, what a truly mysterious thing substance really is. Science today regards protons and electrons as the ultimate material of all the universe. But

<sup>1</sup>Jeans, *ibid.* p. 181.

<sup>2</sup>The Nature of the Physical Universe, pp. 1 and 2. The Macmillan Co.

these are only names for positive and negative electricity. And we are forced then to ask, What is electricity? Science gives no answer.

To the scientists and the philosophers of today, the ultimate nature of substance presents as baffling a mystery as it did to their predecessors of previous centuries. The investigations of modern science and the studies of modern philosophers on this problem serve but to reenforce with new emphasis the conclusion of that profound thinker of the nineteenth century, Cardinal Newman, when after a lifetime of study and reflection, he said: "What do I know of substance or matter? Just as much as the greatest philosopher; and that is nothing at all."<sup>1</sup>

#### *An Analogy*

I have offered an analogy between the change of elements effected by Almighty God through the consecration pronounced by His ambassador, and the kind of transubstantiation effected by the physicist in his laboratory, with a view of showing the rashness of those who would close prematurely the door to such occurrences on the grounds of stark impossibility. May I ask our dear non-Catholic reader to consider one further analogy, which I consider not less striking?

During the course of a chemistry lecture in a public high school some years ago, the instructor was stressing the permanence and immutability of the chemical elements—which incidentally we have just seen is now thoroughly discarded by the leaders in modern science. "You can change the form and the appearances of the elements through various combinations," said the instructor, "but you can never change their nature as distinct and immutable elements." Then he digressed from his lecture. "Catholics," he said, "have a curious doctrine known as the Eucharist. They believe that bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of the Lord. But this is impossible. It is contrary to the laws of chemistry. Bread always remains bread and wine remains wine. They cannot be changed into something different."

On hearing this, a young Catholic girl in the class arose and said: "Professor, I am very much surprised to hear you

<sup>1</sup>Apologia, p. 255.

say that bread and wine cannot be changed into flesh and blood. Especially so, to hear you say that in the name of chemistry. What becomes of the bread which you eat and the wine which you drink? Are they not changed by the laws of nature into your own flesh and blood? If God can effect that change through the laws of nature, of which He is the Author, why can He not effect that change directly and immediately by His own power?" The comparison was striking, the reasoning cogent, and the conclusion inescapable. The instructor was big enough to admit it. "Thanks," he said. "I had never before adverted to the fact that the process of metabolism in the human body is constantly effecting much the same change as you believe takes place at the Consecration. I withdraw my comment as unfounded and incorrect."

#### *God's Ambassadors*

Surely every Christian will admit that all the potency of the laws of nature comes from God, their Creator. If He causes these laws to effect the transformation of bread and wine into flesh and blood, then no one can deny the logic of the girl's reasoning, that He can do directly and immediately that which He delegates and empowers His creatures to do. "Nature," as Chaucer has observed, "is but the vicar of the Almighty Lord." The laws of nature are His ambassadors, proclaiming the presence of an infinite Mind behind the scaffolding and framework of the universe. Without such an Intelligence dovetailing the myriad laws of nature into the harmony of coordinate action for the accomplishment of purposed ends, the cosmos would not be an orderly universe, but a chaos of hopeless anarchy and confusion.

When all is said and done, it is to be acknowledged in the frankest manner, that the Holy Eucharist remains a tremendous and impenetrable mystery. This side of the grave it will always remain so. Only in the life to come, when the darkness of the human intellect will be illuminated by the divine light, shall we come to a better understanding of the manner in which Christ is able to hide Himself under the lowly species of the Eucharistic host to be our nourishment and our abiding strength. Yet the fact of its being a mystery should be no barrier to its acceptance by the human mind. Why? Because nature literally abounds in mysteries. They surround us on every side.

*The Mystery of "How"*

What is the manner in which a blade of grass transforms dead inorganic matter into living protoplasm and endows it with the power of reproduction? All the chemists in the world, with all their accumulated learning and all their laboratory equipment are unable to duplicate the action which every blade of grass and every leaf on the tree effects every day of their lives. In some mysterious manner they succeed in bridging the enormous chasm that separates the inanimate world from the living, a chasm that no scientist has yet been able to cross. What is the secret by which such vast stores of atomic energy are locked up within a single grain of sand, defying man's ability to release? Science knows no answer. How is it possible for the electrons within the atom of a particle of dust to travel about in their tiny prison of less than one-millionth of an inch in diameter with a velocity greater than that of an airplane, while the particle of dust itself appears to be perfectly motionless to the human eye? "A baffling mystery," is science's only reply.

Take one of the apparently simplest actions a human being can perform—the raising of one's finger. What is the manner by means of which this mental concept or wish is telegraphed by the mind to the proper physical member, involving the appropriate action of millions of neurones, the opening of certain nervous paths and the closing of others, the stimulation of certain muscles and the inhibition of others, until the proper finger is lifted to just the desired height? All the psychologists in the world are unable to answer that simple question. Like the others, it remains an impenetrable mystery. That man will ever be able to answer that apparently simple question this side of eternity seems more than unlikely. In short, while we know that actions take place and effects are attained, the answer to the *ultimate how, the precise manner, the detailed process* by which even the simplest actions are performed, remains in almost every case veiled in an opaque mantle of mystery.

*Hand In Hand*

The realization that we are surrounded on every side by mysteries which envelope us as the air we breathe, induces an attitude of intellectual humility which prevents a

person from brushing aside a doctrine as untenable simply because it involves a mystery. In submitting this consideration to my readers, I would like to make it clear that I make no plea for intellectual obscurantism. I ask merely that the same fundamental consideration which obtains in the scientific viewpoint, be not deemed invalid when the truth proposed for belief lies in the field of religion instead of in the domain of science—namely, that assent be not withheld if there be sufficient evidence in its favor simply because knowledge as to the detailed manner in which an effect is achieved, cannot be supplied.

The point we make then is that the acceptance of the truth of the Holy Eucharist involves no violence to reason, simply because we do not understand *how* the Real Presence is achieved. Far from disparaging reason, this procedure not only pays proper deference thereto, but asks simply that reason follow in religious matters the same method which obtains in science and in all other fields, where it has enhanced its dignity by the conquest of truths which lay hidden in the arcana of nature, hopelessly veiled from the scrutiny of the senses. In believing, then, in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist reason and faith travel hand in hand.

*Fruits of the Sacrament*

A final word about the fruits of this great sacrament. The Holy Eucharist may be viewed as the extension of the Incarnation, and its application to the needs of the individual soul. Holy Communion effects a closer union of the soul with Christ by love, floods it with sanctifying grace, strengthens it against sin, and serves as a pledge of its glorious resurrection and future union with God by love in the Beatific Vision. Only the recipient of a worthy Holy Communion can experience that foretaste of heaven and of the intimacy of that union which Christ spoke of when He said: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him." A lover shrinks from the thought of separation, and yearns to be united with the object of his love. By means of the Holy Eucharist, Christ pursues us with His love to the far ends of the world.

Some years ago I had this driven home to me in a



striking manner. I was sojourning in Cairo, Egypt, on returning from the Holy Land. One evening a white robed Egyptian boy came to the Rectory with the message that an American was dying and calling for a priest. I was delegated to bring the last sacraments to the dying man. It was in a little room above a cheap cafe in the slum section of the city that I found the patient. He had been for many years a soldier of fortune, sailing on a trading vessel in the Indian sea. He was now in the last stages of that fatal malady of Egypt, the black fever. His face was emaciated and wan.

After I had heard his confession and given him Holy Communion, he said: "Father, I have been worried for weeks at the thought of dying here in this out-of-the-way corner of the world, friendless and alone, until I became almost delirious. But now," he continued, with tears in his eyes, "it doesn't matter. For I know I'll meet them all again. For Christ will bring me safely home." Before I left, he said: "Isn't it wonderful, Father, to think that I have received the same Christ here in Africa that I received when I made my first Holy Communion twenty years ago in San Jose in Southern California?"

I went out into the dark crooked streets of the ancient city. There on the hill overlooking the city loomed up the rock-ribbed citadel built by Napoleon in conquering the city. Over in the East rose up under the pale light of the moon the sphinx of Egypt and the great pyramids of Ghizeh, erected by the Pharaohs over five thousand years ago. Their vast armies have now been sleeping for fifty centuries beneath the sands of the Sahara. Along the streets loomed up into the night the grotesque figures of the mosques of Mohammed. The words of the dying man came back to me. San Jose, California, and Cairo, Egypt, stood suddenly side by side! The chasm of the centuries was spanned. The intervening stretch of eight thousand miles across land and sea was annihilated by the power of the Divine love that knows no limitations of time or space, "border, nor breed nor race."

Truly indeed is the Holy Eucharist the golden bond by which an Omnipotent Being unites Himself with His children on earth and gives to them a foretaste of that ineffable union

through love in the Beatific Vision which St. Paul sought dimly to describe when He said: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>1 Cor. 2:9.

### Discussion Aids

Is the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist contrary to reason? Discuss. Is it a self-contradiction? Discuss, using the union of the soul and body as an analogy. Discuss the mystery of substance and the kind of transubstantiation possible to the scientists. If protons and electrons are the ultimate material of the universe and they are only names for positive and negative electricity, a something which is itself still a mystery, explain why Catholics may with reason hold the doctrine of transubstantiation. Name some of the mysteries to be found in nature. Can science explain them? Do these mysteries do violence to our reason? Why, then, should the mystery of the Real Presence? What are the fruits of the Holy Eucharist?

### Practices:

Learn to see the glory of God in the beauties and wonders of nature. Take a good look at the sky on a clear night.

Make your visits to Christ in the Holy Eucharist a source of increased knowledge of God's love for us.

Make frequent use of the prayer, "I do believe, Lord: help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23).

## Chapter XX

### FREQUENT HOLY COMMUNION: WHY?

A characteristic of contemporary religious thought is the vagueness of its concepts of God. Thus Prof. Henry N. Wieman of the Divinity School of Chicago University pictures the Deity as "a system of cosmic patterns making for the maximum of mutuality"—a concept so nebulous as to be for all practical religious purposes utterly meaningless, a mere collocation of words with no anchorage in objective reality. In discarding the personal pronoun *He* and using an *it* when referring to his deity, Prof. Wieman shows that his newly-discovered system of patterns is not only devoid of personality, but has no more resemblance to the God of historical Christianity than night has to day. In fact, it does not differ in any perceptible manner from the only god the atheist knows, namely, matter and energy.

In other circles it has become the fashion to use the term God in a vague manner as a synonym for the cosmos from which every connotation of personality has been rigorously torn. Prof. S. Alexander of Manchester University speaks of the deity as the *nisus* or striving of the universe to beget Him, thus claiming that He has not yet come into being. How he could possibly know that the Deity is on the way is an even greater mystery than the one he seeks to solve.

Prof. E. S. Ames of the University of Chicago pictures the deity as a mental concept similar to our concept of Uncle Sam, a symbol of the United States with no existence in objective reality. Prof. John F. Shepard of the University of Michigan would seem to differ from Prof. Ames only in lack of vagueness and in greater bluntness. "God," he says, "is a kinaesthetic hallucination."

Thus do the concepts range from such utter vagueness as to be perfectly unintelligible and incoherent down to a complete denial of the reality of a Divine Being. Hence we have witnessed in recent years the strangest and most bewildering phenomenon in the history of religion—the effort

to establish a religion without a God. The result of course is not a religion but a system of ethical culture in which hortatory rhetoric is substituted for divine sanctions. It is a corpse from which the breath of life has fled.

#### A Contrast

In contrast with such vacillating uncertainty and groping vagueness as to the very existence of a Deity stands the teaching of the Catholic Church concerning the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Jesus Christ is God incarnate. The tremendous implications of this mighty truth are thus pointed out by Robert Browning:

I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ  
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee  
All questions in the world and out of it.

Christ who cleansed the lepers, restored sight to the blind, healed the sick, pardoned sinners and died on Calvary's Cross for the redemption of mankind is present in the Eucharist. When Christ appeared to His Apostles in the upper chamber after His resurrection, the doors and windows were closed. Yet Christ stood suddenly in their midst and spoke to them. In that same glorified body which transcended the properties of matter, Christ is present in the sacrament of His love.

The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist stands, therefore, as an antidote for the vagueness of contemporary thought and as an anchor against the shifting currents of modern uncertainty and doubt. It takes God out of the mists of speculation and brings Him into our very midst to be our Counsellor, our Inspirer and our changeless Friend. In Holy Communion He comes to us as our heavenly manna, the bread of angels and the nutriment for our souls. All who hold steadfast to this central doctrine of historical Christianity will find in it an invincible armour against the assaults of modern unbelief.

#### The Teaching of Christ

Let us glance briefly at the teaching of Christ on this subject. It is stated with great clearness in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. John in the following verses:

"Amen, amen I say unto you: He that believeth in me,

hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat it, he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day.

"For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live for ever. These things he said, teaching in the synagogues, in Capharnaum. Many therefore of his disciples, hearing it, said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it? ...

"After this many of his disciples went back; and walked no more with him. Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known, that thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

Christ fulfilled the promise to give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink at the Last Supper, the night before He died. St. Matthew thus records the fulfillment: "And while they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke and gave to His disciples and said: Take ye and eat. This is my body. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins."

With the words, "Do ye this in commemoration of me," Christ authorized and commanded the Apostles and their successors to do the same as He had just done. St. Paul reflects this belief and practice of the Church in the first cen-

tury, which is the same as that of the Church in the twentieth century, when he writes to the Corinthians: "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" Such then is the clear teaching of Christ concerning the Holy Eucharist—the Sacrament bringing to us His body and blood as our food and nourishment. Such is the belief of the Apostles and of all the members of the Church founded by Christ for more than nineteen hundred years.

*"The Word of Christ is Sufficient . . ."*

One day a messenger, breathless with haste, burst in upon King Louis IX of France with surprising news. "Your Majesty," he cried, "hasten to the Church! A great miracle is occurring there. A priest is saying holy Mass, and after the consecration instead of the host there is visible on the altar Jesus Himself in His human figure. Everybody is marveling at it. Hurry before it disappears."

To the astonishment of the messenger, the saintly monarch calmly replied: "Let them go to see that miracle who have any doubt regarding the real presence of our Lord in the holy Sacrament. As for me, even if I saw Jesus on the altar in His visible form, and touched Him with my hand, and heard His voice, I should not be more convinced than I now am, that He is present in the consecrated Host. The word of Christ is sufficient for me. I need no miracle." Such too should be the faith of every believer in Christ. For what greater credential can there be for any Christian than the word of Christ Himself?

We come now to the question: What use are we making of the greatest gift within the power of an Omnipotent God to bestow upon mankind—the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist? We can avail ourselves of this divine benefaction by attending holy Mass and offering in union with the priest the Eucharistic Victim in atonement for our sins, by visiting our Eucharistic King in the tabernacles on our altars, and particularly by receiving our divine Lord in Holy Communion. No devotion is dearer to the Church than that of frequent, even daily Holy Communion. The late Holy Father, Pius X, encouraged all the faithful to receive frequently this heavenly food. It offers the greatest assistance in living an



upright and holy life, and constitutes our sure defense against all the temptations which assail us.

### *Fruits of Sacrament*

The fruits of this sacrament are manifold. It deepens our sense of the reality of God, makes us conscious of His comradeship, enables us to perceive Him as the witness of our every deed, the auditor of our every word, the spectator of the thoughts and aspirations which stir inarticulately in the silent kingdom of the soul.

Closer is He than breathing,  
Nearer than hands or feet.

It thus frees us from the tyranny of the senses with their dependence upon the visible, the tangible, the palpable. It helps us to realize that the most profound realities of life are those which are spiritual and lie beyond the reach of the senses. It enables us to understand what St. Paul meant when he said: "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal." It prompts us to exclaim with the holy souls of every age: "Ah! Christ, impalpable, I grasp Thee; inapprehensible, I clutch Thee."

It delivers us from the narrow prison cell of time and place by making us one in spirit with the choice souls of every generation to whom the presence of God is the most abiding reality in life. It enables us to break through the shell of external circumstance and grasp the kernel of spiritual reality which alone gives meaning and significance to human life. This sharpened perception of spiritual realities, this heightened sense of the presence of God constitutes the essential difference between the religious-minded person and the worldling.

While making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1925, I chanced to pass through Smyrna, Greece. It was shortly after the Turks had pillaged and burned the city, and put hundreds to the sword. Still standing among the ruins was a convent. Among the nuns was one from Ireland. "Do you not feel lost," I asked, "in this out-of-the-way corner of the world, so far from your home in Ireland?" Pointing to the tabernacle, she replied: "Father, wherever the Blessed Sacrament is, there I am at home. For there is my Lord and my God."

How true that is! They are the words which every religious priest or nun or lay person can utter. How effective does the Eucharistic Lord dispel the touch of nostalgia from the heart of the missionary arriving in a foreign land. For where our Lord and our God is, there can be no homesickness. For He is the essential element in every home.

### *Hidden Source of Strength*

I have visited homes in Mexico where sisters, wearing the dress of laywomen, were carrying on the work of Christian education in spite of the government's prohibition. No religious picture, image or symbol could be displayed. No tabernacle, no altar, no chapel was permitted. Yet in every such home I would be led into a room where hidden away in a bureau, bookcase or other furniture was the Blessed Sacrament. There the sisters repaired to draw strength and courage to continue their uphill fight against the systematic efforts of the revolutionary government to stamp out religion from the land. Take away their garb, their altar, their chapel, their crucifixes and all the external symbols of their faith, but leave them their Eucharistic Lord and King, and you will have left them all that matters.

To that hidden place they go to give themselves Holy Communion, and thus to keep alive in the twentieth century the glorious traditions of the Church of the Catacombs. That which is keeping the faith alive in Mexico today, in spite of the most savage persecution of religion in modern times, is the Holy Eucharist which is kept in thousands of homes, barns and caves beyond the spying eyes of the minions of the government. The gentle Christ who said, "My delight is to be with the children of men," is fulfilling His promise and is providing the Catholics of Mexico in this hour of trial with their hidden source of strength and courage. With their backs to the wall and their faces to the stars, the Eucharistic Christ will hearten them for the combat until they have shown once again to the world the futility of machine guns and firing squads to crush the naked human soul when steeled with a deathless faith.

It is not only to missionaries in distant lands, and to Christians under the fire of persecution, however, that the Holy Eucharist brings strength and intrepidity, but to all lonely and homesick souls. On the day I write these lines a

student said to me: "Father, when I came to the University a few weeks ago, I was homesick and lonely. It is so large an institution and it's my first time away from home for any length of time. But after receiving Holy Communion all feelings of loneliness and homesickness vanished." He little knew that he was but voicing the experience of every student and of every person away from the warmth of the family fireside and the loving atmosphere of home. When Christ comes into our hearts, there we are at home—in any city or in any land.

Every one who has felt the warm intimacy of the love of Christ in frequent Holy Communion is able to make his own the words of a contemporary poet:

Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest  
Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny:  
Yea with one voice, O world, tho' thou deniest,  
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

#### *An Antidote for Sin*

Another fruit of Holy Communion is the strength which it gives to resist temptation and to break any habit of sin previously acquired. There are some who think that frequent Holy Communion should be the exclusive privilege of holy souls far removed from the dangers of sin. Yet the Sacred Congregation of the Council thought otherwise. For in its *Decree on Daily Holy Communion* the Council expressly declares:

"The desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church that all the faithful should daily approach the sacred banquet is directed chiefly to this end, that the faithful, being united to God by means of the Sacrament, may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable; so that its primary purpose is not that the honour and reverence due to our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients. Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist 'the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins.'"

It is therefore needed most of all by those who are weak and are struggling to break the manacles of a sinful habit. It

is the supreme remedy against temptation and the most powerful influence in freeing one from a vicious practice. There is no habit, no matter how strong the links in the chain of its practice, which can long resist the sledge-hammer blows of this sacrament. The manacles of sensuality, intoxication, anger, jealousy, greed, all fall into smithereens before the devastating blows of this divine power.

This truth is illustrated by an incident related by St. Philip Neri. As a result of a long life spent in ministering to the youth of Rome, this holy priest was wont to declare that frequent Holy Communion was not only the most efficacious means of safeguarding virtue, but was also the only effective means of breaking the chains of certain habits of sensuality. One day a youth came to his confessional and said:

"Father, I am bound hand and foot by the chain of a sensual habit which I have tried in vain to break. In spite of all my efforts to reform, I find myself falling again and again. I would do anything if I could but free myself from its galling tyranny which is making my life a living hell."

"Do you really wish to break yourself of this habit?" asked St. Philip.

"Father," replied the youth, "give me any penance and see if I will not gladly do it."

"All right, then," said the priest, "I will give you an infallible remedy. You go to daily Holy Communion for a month. If you should be so unfortunate as to experience a single relapse, which may God avert, I ask you to rush immediately to confession, and then to Holy Communion."

This the youth did. At the end of the month he was able to say: "Father, for the first time in years I am able to draw the breath of a free man. Not only has daily Holy Communion freed me from this practice, but it has filled me with such revulsion for that vice that I feel confident I will never again stoop to that degradation."

In the experience of that young man there is mirrored the experience of all mankind, young and old. So true is this that every confessor can say to any penitent groveling in the mire of sensuality, manacled by the chains of an oft-repeated act: "My friend, do you really wish to break this habit? Then if you do, you will go to daily Holy Communion until you have broken this habit. If you are not willing to do this,

then you are making a mockery of the purpose of amendment. You are lacking in determination and in sincerity." It is high time for penitents to realize that purpose of amendment means more than a mere moving of the lips. It means the whole-hearted utilization of a remedy of demonstrated effectiveness. In short, it means having recourse to daily Holy Communion.

*"But Now I am Strong . . ."*

During the persecution of the Roman Emperor Diocletian many Christians paid with their life for their faith in Christ. Among the number seized on one occasion were a father and his young son. Brought before the pagan tribunal, the Emperor commanded the father to offer incense to the gods of imperial Rome or pay the penalty with his life. "Rather than betray the Faith," replied the father, "which has been purchased for me at the cost of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, I will die." Whereupon he was cast into the arena and there before the howling savage mob he suffered the gladiator's sword to sever his head from his body, thus sealing with his life's blood his faith in the crucified Christ. As the son, a little boy of twelve, witnessed the cruel death inflicted upon his father, he was overcome with horror. His face grew pale with fear. Tears filled his eyes. The Emperor, seeing the terror-stricken condition of the boy, said: "You surely will not do such a foolish thing as your father. Come, offer incense to the gods of Rome and I will not only spare your life but will give you anything your youthful heart will ask."

The boy had taken a few steps toward the incense pyre when suddenly he stopped spellbound in his tracks. What was that voice he heard echoing in his inner ear? It was the voice of his martyred sire uttering his dying words. Turning about, he walked quickly over to the spot in the arena where the sand was still crimsoned with the warm life-blood of his father. He stooped and clenching it in his hand said: "But a few moments ago I was weak and about to yield, but now I am strong with the blood of my father. Rather than deny the faith purchased for me by the blood of Jesus Christ and of my own martyred father, I too will die."

With a smile lighting up his youthful countenance, and a on his lips, he placed his head upon the swordman's

block. As the head fell, severed from the body, the blood trickling down in the sand mingled with the warm life-blood of his father. Devout Christians who stood near-by saw in that union a reflection of that other union that took place beyond the skies, where father and son were clasped in the arms of the Master to receive from His hand the glorious crown of martyrdom.

Those words of the martyred youth in ancient Rome are the words which every communicant can truthfully utter: "A little while ago," he could say, "I was weak and about to yield. But now I am strong with the blood of my Father and my God. Rather than betray Him by the commission of a deliberate mortal sin, I too would be willing to die." For in Holy Communion we do not merely clench in our hands sand crimsoned with blood, but we receive into our very hearts the body and blood, the soul and divinity of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We become partakers of a divine life and secure a foretaste of that union with Christ in the beatific vision which constitutes the essential happiness of heaven.

#### *Still More Fruits*

Among the other fruits of Holy Communion are an increase of sanctifying grace, the remission of venial sins, a strengthening of the will, an increased horror of sin and the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. Even mortal sin is washed from the soul of the person who unmindful of such an offense receives Holy Communion in good faith. This implies that the communicant have sorrow for all his sins and that if the mortal sin should later come to his mind, he will mention it in his next confession. The reason for this indirect remission of mortal sin through Holy Communion is to be found in the fact that it infuses sanctifying grace into the soul of the person who does not knowingly place an obstacle in the way. But sanctifying grace not only beautifies the soul, but removes any sin, mortal or venial, that may be there. Hence, Holy Communion indirectly remits even mortal sin.

Treating of the efficacy of the sacrament in strengthening the will to resist temptation, the Catechism of the Council of Trent says: "In the holy mysteries is, moreover, such efficacy as to preserve us pure and unhurt from sin and from



*the assault of temptations*, and prepare the soul, as it were, by a heavenly medicine, against the easy approach and infection of virulent and deadly disease. . . . It also restrains and represses the lust of the flesh; for whilst it inflames souls more with the fire of charity, it of necessity extinguishes the ardour of concupiscence." (Part ii, chap. 4, quest. 51.)

St. Thomas Aquinas, the prince of the Church's theologians, thus sums up the far-reaching effects of Holy Communion: "The Sacrament of the Body of the Lord puts the demons to flight, defends us against the incentives to vice and to concupiscence, cleanses the soul from sin, assuages the anger of God, enlightens the understanding to know God, inflames the will and the affections with the love of God, fills the memory with spiritual sweetness, confirms the entire man in good, frees us from eternal death, multiplies the merits of a good life, leads us to our everlasting home, and reanimates the body to eternal life."

#### *Knute Rockne's Story*

The person who is strengthened to resist temptation is by that very fact heartened to fight more courageously for virtue, honor, right, manliness. One who knows he is free from sin and whose friendship with his Lord and Maker has been deepened and made more intimate through Holy Communion throws himself into his undertakings with greater courage and abandon. Knute Rockne, the famed coach at Notre Dame, tells of the deep impression made upon him by witnessing his players arise on the morning of a game and go off to receive Holy Communion. His observant eye could not fail to notice the abandon with which such players threw themselves into the game and fought with the courage of untamed tigers.

Here, in brief, is the way Rockne tells the story: "I used to be impressed deeply at the sight of my players receiving Communion every morning, and finally I made it a point of going to Mass with them on the morning of a game. I realized that it appeared more or less incongruous, when we arrived in town for a game, for the general public to see my boys rushing off to church as soon as they got off the train, while their coach rode to the hotel and took his ease. So, for the sake of appearances, if nothing else, I made it a point to go to church with the boys on the morning of a game.

"One night before a big game in the East, I was nervous and worried about the outcome of the game the next day and was unable to sleep. I tossed and rolled about the bed, and finally decided that I'd get up and dress, then go down to the lobby and sit in a chair alone with my thoughts. It must have been two or three o'clock in the morning when I arrived in the deserted lobby, so I took a chair and tried to get that football game off my mind by engaging some bellboys in conversation.

"Along about five or six o'clock in the morning I started pacing the lobby of the hotel; when suddenly I ran into two of my players hurrying out. I asked them where they were going at such an hour, although I had a good idea.

"Then I retired to a chair in the corner of the lobby where I couldn't be seen, but where I could see every one who went in or out of the door. Within the next few minutes, my players kept hurrying out of the door in pairs and groups, and finally when they were about all gone, I got over near the door so I could question the next player who came along. In a minute or two, the last members of the squad hurried out of an elevator and made for the door. I stopped them and asked them if they, too, were going to Mass, and they replied that they were. I decided to go along with them. Although they probably didn't realize it, these youngsters were making a powerful impression on me with their piety and devotion, and when I saw all of them walking up to the Communion rail to receive, and realized the several hours' sleep they had sacrificed in order to do this, I understood for the first time what a powerful ally their religion was to those boys in their work on the football field. This was when I really began to see the light; to know what was missing in my life, and, later on, I had the great pleasure of being able to join my boys at the Communion rail."

#### *Requirements for Daily Communion*

What are the requirements for daily Communion? In answer to this question, the Sacred Congregation of the Council decreed on December 16, 1905 as follows:

"1. Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of

grace, and who approaches the holy table with a right and devout disposition, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

"2. A right disposition consists in this: that he who approaches the holy table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects."

From this it is evident that any person who is not certain that he is in the state of mortal sin, and who approaches the holy table for the purpose of nourishing his soul with this heavenly bread, is to be admitted to the sacrament. Mere scruples or doubts are not sufficient to prohibit him. Nothing but the absolute certainty of mortal sin.

Furthermore, it is not necessary for one to go to confession every time one wishes to receive. This would impose some inconvenience on a person and would doubtless deter a number. The Council is explicit in declaring that nothing need keep a person from approaching as often as he wishes, provided only that he is in the state of grace and has the proper disposition. By making daily Holy Communion so easily available, the Church shows her profound solicitude in having the faithful approach with the greatest possible frequency.

### *"The Food of Life"*

Speaking at the National Eucharistic Congress at New Orleans, Archbishop Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, declared: "We call ours a Christian civilization. Now Christian means follower of Christ, and the substance of Christianity is the life of Christ within us, in our thoughts and in our private and public actions. If such a life is lacking, there remains nothing of Christianity but the name; and this is left to us not as a glory but as a reproach.

"Our altars are the center of this life—the center for the priests who there offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, and there make known the word of God; the center for the faithful who gathering in the churches before the altar strengthen their souls at the tabernacle. We must not think of the tabernacle simply as a shrine to be visited, nor must we regard the Eucharist merely as a sacred symbol to be honored. It is a food to be received, it is the food of life, of the Christian

life—which therefore ought to be a Eucharistic life, and a Eucharistic life cannot but be an apostolate."

After pointing out evils which distressed him, Pope Pius XI in his radio address to the Congress said: "May we not discern, however, a promise of better things for the Universal Church in the reflowering among you and among all peoples of Eucharistic love and the daily increase of ardent devotion for the august Sacrament? . . . While we exhort you from our paternal heart to most holy zeal towards the Blessed Sacrament, we fervently pray with you that, strong in youth, your people, who stand forth in wealth and power, may also be a shining example of Catholic faith and Christian virtue."

### *'Unworthy to Receive Often'*

Let us now consider some of the objections to frequent and daily Communion.

*I do not consider myself worthy to receive Holy Communion often.*

This objection is based upon a misconception of the primary purpose of Holy Communion. It is not so much a reward for virtue as it is an antidote for sin. "If you are not worthy to communicate every day," asks St. Ambrose, "are you more worthy after abstaining a year from Communion?"<sup>1</sup> The very fact that you feel yourself weak and easily drawn into sin is the very reason why you should receive often. The Church bids you to repeat with the priest before Communion the humble acknowledgment: "Lord, I am not worthy." The longer you abstain from this heavenly food the less worthy do you become to receive, since it is, as the Council of Trent points out, "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins."

Paderewski tells us that when he failed to practice on his piano for a single day, he could notice the difference in his playing. When he remained away two days, his wife could notice the difference, three days, his friends could observe it, and when he remained away four days, the whole audience could notice the difference. So too it is with those who are accustomed to keep not their fingers but their hearts and consciences sensitive to the music of divine grace and the

<sup>1</sup>De Sacramentis, lib. V. C. IV.

warmth of divine love by daily Holy Communion. Each day's abstinence leaves its perceptible effect in dulling the sensitivity of the conscience to the music of divine inspiration and in blunting the delicacy of the love for the Eucharistic Lord.

#### *Mechanical Routine*

*I am afraid of losing my respect and devotion for Holy Communion by too great familiarity. The reception will become too much of a mechanical routine.*

Loss of devotion will result from improper preparation. But if one prepares devoutly for Holy Communion, frequent reception will deepen the sentiments of reverence and love. Familiarity in the sense of intimacy and union with Christ is not to be deprecated but is the object of all prayer and spiritual exercise. In regard to routine, two kinds are to be distinguished. There is the routine objected to in *Rule 2* of the *Decree on Daily Holy Communion*. This is the purely mechanical reception of the Sacrament with an attitude of irreverence or at least of indifference, in short, with an absence of "a right and devout disposition." This attitude is the very opposite of the one engendered by frequent Communion when care is taken to prepare properly for this great act by the arousal of sentiments of reverence and love. "They that eat me, shall yet hunger; and they that drink me, shall yet thirst." This saying of Ecclesiasticus reflects the experience of every devout recipient of frequent Communion.

The second kind of routine is that which is synonymous with *habit*. In this sense routine indicates a facility of action which is most desirable in regard to all virtuous deeds. Thus it is eminently desirable to make the daily recitation of one's morning and evening prayers a matter of routine or habit. Hence too it is most desirable to make the devout reception of daily Holy Communion a matter of habitual practice instead of being dependent upon whim or caprice. The whole aim of the spiritual life is to render the performance of virtuous actions a matter of routine or habit.

#### *Confession Each Day?*

*I don't like going to Communion without confession and I don't have either the time or the opportunity to go to confession each day.*

The Church teaches that one may receive Holy Communion repeatedly without going to confession, provided of course one is not conscious of any mortal sin. Why then should you insert an action not required by the Pope? The *Decree on Daily Communion* explicitly states that only two conditions are requisite, namely, the "state of grace" and "a right and devout intention." It is not the mark of a good Catholic to be more exacting than the Pope. Consequently, one may go to Communion for several weeks if he desires on the one confession.

#### *Inappropriate for Men*

*Frequent Holy Communion is all right for women and children, but is somewhat inappropriate for men.*

With God there is no double standard of morality or piety, one for women and another for men. Prayer and the sacraments are the means of grace alike for men, women and children. Because men are frequently more exposed to temptation than women, there is a correspondingly greater need for this divine antidote to sin. It is a complete misconception of the purpose for which Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist to think that it was meant chiefly for women and children. It is meant for all and especially for those who are exposed to danger. It is their best fortification.

The martyrs who walked out into the arena of the Roman amphitheater to face the gladiator's sword or the savage lions found in the devout reception of the Holy Eucharist the strength which sustained them for their ordeal without faltering. "The strongest among the pure and the purest among the strong," said Jean Paul Richter, "Christ with His wounded hands lifted empires from their hinges and changed the stream of centuries." He who bows his head in the frequent reception of this divine manna becomes the strongest, the most manly and the most courageous among men.

When Frederick B. Snite, Jr., was stricken with infantile paralysis while traveling in China, the doctors gave him about a week to live. Four years have now elapsed and he is still alive and apparently winning his battle against the dread disease. True, his parents with princely generosity and a devotion that has never faltered have provided him with every help known to medical science. But this does not ex-



plain the secret of his indomitable courage, his buoyancy and his unfailing cheerfulness. If you ask him, he will tell you that it is that Eucharistic food which comes to him each day.

After the malady had paralyzed the muscles used in breathing, it then rendered him unable to utter a single word. The walls of the iron lung closed in upon him, leaving only his head free. Unable to move, unable to breathe by himself, unable to speak. What a plight! Yet in this awful crisis the priest brought to him each day a hidden source of strength and courage. After months elapsed, his father disclosed to me when I visited his son, he regained the power to utter a single word barely audible to those standing near him. It was the single word "God!"—the first word he uttered upon emerging from that breathless and speechless world in which he had been so long imprisoned.

Slowly he regained a little more strength and became able to say a whole phrase. When the priest one morning held aloft the Eucharistic host, preparatory to giving him Holy Communion, there came from his lips as he gazed devoutly at his Eucharistic Lord the scarcely audible ejaculation, "O God! How I thank Thee for this Gift!" Truly is the Holy Eucharist the source of courage, of strength, of manliness. It is the Bread of Angels and the food of heroes.

#### *Not Sufficient Time*

*I do not have sufficient time for proper preparation for Holy Communion nor for the thanksgiving afterwards. Hence, I cannot receive often.*

True, there should be due preparation. But does this mean the recitation of many prayers, the performance of many devotional exercises? Not at all. The best preparation for Communion is a good life and the sanctifying of one's ordinary daily actions. Moreover, "frequent Communion is the best preparation for Communion," says a Lapidé, "one Communion is thanksgiving for another; and the Communion of to-day is the best preparation for the Communion of to-morrow." "Therefore," says St. Alphonsus Liguori, "if you have not time to prepare yourself, in consequence of some good work or some duty of your state, do not abstain from Communion on that account. Only take care to avoid useless conversations and occupation that is not urgent."

If one is hurried, it will still be possible to make the immediate preparation while going to the church, and to continue the thanksgiving on the way home. There are two axioms which apply here, namely, "Where there is a will, there is a way," and "Love will find a way." The individual who has once experienced the warmth and intimacy of daily union with Christ in Holy Communion will laugh at the trivial excuses which deter the faint-hearted and the indifferent.

#### *Not Able to Keep It Up*

*Why should I start the practice of daily Communion when I know that I shall not be able to keep it up?*

Because a half a loaf is better than none at all. Even if the practice cannot be continued when one leaves school, or moves to a different location, it will nevertheless be a matter of supreme importance to have fortified one's character and deepened one's virtue and piety by having received frequently for even a limited period. The fact is that young people during the plastic days of their youth stand in need of greater spiritual reinforcements than they will after their characters are formed. During adolescence new passions are awakening within them. Their experience is very limited and offers but little help in restraining the forces striving for the mastery. During this crucial period when youth is sculpturing his character for weal or for woe, it is an immense advantage to form the habit of frequent Communion so that he will have the most powerful ally in the world on his side.

There can be no doubt of the successful outcome if the youth will employ the most effective antidote for the temptations that press round about him on every side. The habit of frequent Communion will tide him over the critical years of adolescence and plant so deep in his young soul the seeds of piety and virtue that the afteryears will bring an abundant harvest. Daily Holy Communion for the youth of every school and college in our land is the ideal placed before us by the Sovereign Pontiff. A ministry of about a quarter of a century among the youth of the fourth largest university in America has crystallized in me the unshakeable conviction that the formation of such a habit is the best guarantee of

their enduring faith and character and the most valuable contribution we can render to them.

*"Christ Knocks, But You Must Open"*

In the chapel of Keble College, Oxford, there hangs the famous masterpiece, *The Light of the World*, by Holman Hunt. It depicts the Master standing and knocking at a door upon which vines are growing. The hinges are rusty from long disuse. In His hand He holds a lantern. "Behold!" He is saying, "I stand at the door and knock." When Hunt had finished his painting, he invited his fellow artists to inspect it. They viewed it carefully from this angle and from that. Loud were they in their praise.

"It is a masterpiece of all time," they said.

"But," said one of them, "you have forgotten one thing."

"What is that?" asked Hunt.

"You have forgotten to place a knob on the door."

"No," said Hunt, "I have not forgotten it. I have omitted it purposely. For that is the door of the human heart and it opens only from within."

Christ may knock. Christ may plead. But it is only we who can admit Him. Christ is standing today before the door of every human heart, pleading for admittance in the Sacrament of His Love. Will you not open it each day and let Him in?

If Catholics but understood how easy and simple it is to receive Holy Communion frequently, even daily, and how fruitful is this practice, the number of frequent communicants would grow by leaps and bounds. Certainly, weekly reception is most easy. We all are obliged to hear Mass on Sunday. Why not arise at the Communion time and walk up to the railing and receive the Source of all goodness and the Author of all holiness? Why not thus receive the maximum fruit of the Eucharistic Sacrifice?

Will you not, dear reader, put aside all vacillation and hesitancy and do your part through frequent Communion in bringing about that Eucharistic renaissance which means so much for the happiness of the individual and the peace and welfare of the world? Let us show the world once and for all by the eloquence of our actions that we believe with a profound and deathless faith the words of our divine Master,

Jesus Christ: "My flesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up on the last day."

### Discussion Aids

How do some non-Catholic professors look upon God? What results from the effort to establish a religion without God? How is Christ present in the Holy Eucharist? Where in Scripture is found Christ's teaching on this Sacrament? When did Christ institute the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist? Has the Church's teaching on the Real Presence changed in 1900 years? Tell the story related about King Louis. What are some of the fruits of the Sacrament? Explain how the Eucharist is a hidden source of strength. How does frequent Holy Communion help one to resist temptation to sin? Under what conditions will Holy Communion indirectly cleanse the soul of mortal sin? How does St. Thomas sum up the effects of Holy Communion? What effect did the good example of his players have on Rockne? What are the requirements for frequent or daily Holy Communion? Let five members in turn discuss and refute the excuses often advanced by those who are not frequent communicants.

*Practices.* Resolve to receive Holy Communion frequently, daily if possible, and at least weekly. Form within your discussion club or your family a daily Mass and Holy Communion league by having at least one member represent the club or family at Mass and Communion each day.

If you cannot actually receive Holy Communion daily invite God to come to you spiritually. Memorize the following and make it a part of your morning prayers:

### *Spiritual Communion*

My Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love Thee above all things, and I desire to receive Thee into my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. (*Here form an ardent desire to receive Jesus into your heart.*) I embrace Thee, as if Thou wert already there, and unite myself wholly to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee. Amen.—(300 days. Pius XI, 1927.)

## Chapter XXI.

## THE PRIESTHOOD: A DIVINE INSTITUTION

*The Priest Is Christ's Ambassador to Men*

The Catholic Church differs from Protestant denominations in that it alone possesses an altar and a priesthood. It worships Almighty God not alone by prayer but by sacrifice as well. It offers up in an unbloody manner the Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. This sacrifice was foreshadowed in the Old Law by the bloody sacrifice of the priesthood of Levi, the offerings of sheep and goats and oxen. The offering of the sacrifice of bread and wine by Melchisedech, King of Salem, and priest of the Most High, typified the clean oblation of which the prophet Malachi spoke: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts."<sup>1</sup> Such is the divinely inspired prophecy concerning that clean oblation, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass which constitutes the central act of worship in the Church founded by Christ.

Without a priesthood, however, there can be no altar and no sacrifice, as the experience of our separated brethren abundantly demonstrates. There can be preaching and prayer. But that essential element of worship, sacrifice, which bulks so large in the Old Testament, is lost without a priesthood. Did Christ found a Church but make no provision for a priesthood to offer sacrifice? Did He fail to institute a priesthood which would continue in all ages the work He had begun? Did He launch His bark without captain or crew to guide it over the unchartered waters of the centuries yet to come?

*A Strange Procedure*

That Christ acted in this strange manner would seem to be the belief of our Protestant friends. For in their eyes the minister who preaches to them is clothed with no divine

<sup>1</sup>Mal. 1:11.

power. His authority comes solely from the congregation which employs him. He is like the artist who plays the organ, the secretary who keeps the books, and like them is dismissable at the will and caprice of the congregation which hires them.

That Christ did not act in the strange manner above described, founding a Church but failing to make any provision for its perpetuation through a definite ministry, has been the constant belief of the Church which He founded. The Church teaches that Christ not only instituted the priesthood but conferred upon it clearly specified powers and authority. It is inconceivable to her that a Divine Being, Jesus Christ, would found a Church to minister to the spiritual needs of mankind in all succeeding ages without establishing a ministry and conferring upon it the power and authority necessary to enable the Church to fulfill her divinely appointed mission. Such is the procedure which both reason and common sense would lead us to expect.

Such is the procedure which the New Testament shows us Christ *actually* followed. It tells us that Christ selected twelve Apostles and constituted them His first priests. Upon them He conferred the power of ordaining others to continue their work. The sacrament by which men are ordained and receive the power and grace to discharge the duties of the priestly office is Holy Orders.

*The First Ordination*

It was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, when after consecrating the elements of bread and wine into the Holy Eucharist, He said to the Apostles: "Do ye this for a commemoration of me."<sup>1</sup> The Council of Trent declares: "If anyone says that by these words: 'Do ye this for a commemoration of me,' Christ did not constitute the Apostles priests, or did not ordain that they and other priests offer His body and blood, let him be anathema."

At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New Law according to the order of Melchisedech, fulfilled the promise which He had previously made to the Apostles, that He would give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. He instituted as a permanent and official act of wor-

<sup>1</sup>Luke, 22:19.



ship the Eucharistic Sacrifice which He had just offered. In commanding the Apostles to do what He had just done, He gave them the power which that act entails, namely, the power to consecrate. In authorizing them to offer the self-same Sacrifice which He had instituted, Christ made the Apostles and their successors the sharers of His eternal priesthood.

Christ completed the communication of His priesthood to the Apostles, when a few days later He conferred upon them the other strictly sacerdotal power of forgiving sins. On that first Easter Christ appeared to His Apostles and said to them: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."<sup>1</sup>

The Apostles regarded themselves henceforth as ministers of reconciliation. Thus St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "God hath reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. . . . For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors; God, as it were, exhorting through us."<sup>2</sup> In other words God sends Christ to reconcile sinners; Christ sends us. We are His ambassadors of mercy to sinful men, divinely commissioned to cleanse and heal them.

The third great power which Christ conferred upon His priests is that of preaching the gospel with authority. While this is not so distinctively a sacerdotal power as that of celebrating Mass or of forgiving sins, it is nevertheless a mark of divine delegation which sets them off from the laity. This power of teaching in His name Christ conferred upon His first priests when He said to them: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations. . . teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you. And, behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."<sup>3</sup> The right of the priest to preach the gospel with authority entails upon the laity the correlative obligation of listening to the same and of heeding its precepts. Christ sets

<sup>1</sup>John, 20:21-23.

<sup>2</sup>II Cor., 5:18-20.

<sup>3</sup>Matt. 28:19-20.

forth this obligation in the following explicit manner: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."<sup>1</sup>

### "Do Ye This. . ."

It seems most probable from the evidence afforded by the New Testament that Christ ordained the Apostles priests and empowered them to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice with no special ceremony but with the simple words: "Do ye this in commemoration of me." Here, as in the case of some of the other sacraments, Christ after instituting the sacrament left it to His Church to determine the matter and form, the precise manner in which the sacrament was to be conferred upon subsequent recipients.

This was apparently determined shortly after the sacrament was instituted. For St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles and St. Paul in his epistles mention all the elements of the sacrament, namely, the external symbolic rite of the imposition of hands and prayer, the internal grace thus communicated, and the institution of the sacrament by Christ. Thus St. Luke writes: "These (the seven deacons) they set before the Apostles, and they praying, imposed hands upon them."<sup>2</sup> "Then they, fasting and praying, and imposing their hands upon them (Paul and Barnabas) sent them away."<sup>3</sup>

Paul and Barnabas ordained priests to carry on their ministry among colonies of newly converted Christians, while the two Apostles moved on to new fields: "And when they had ordained to them priests in every church, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they believed."<sup>4</sup> St. Paul warns Timothy that the sacrament of Orders is to be conferred only on those candidates who give every assurance of fitness for the holy priesthood, saying: "Impose not hands lightly upon any man."<sup>5</sup>

### Mere Officeholders?

Some non-Catholic writers have contended that the distinction between clergy and laity arose solely from the need

<sup>1</sup>Luke, 10:16.

<sup>2</sup>Acts, 6:6.

<sup>3</sup>13:3.

<sup>4</sup>14:22.

<sup>5</sup>I Tim. 5:22.

of maintaining good order in the Church and that the priests were mere officeholders deriving their authority from the congregation. Such a contention is contradicted by the unanimous voice of Christian antiquity. From the earliest days we find express reference in the writings of the Fathers to bishops, priests and deacons, as indeed we do in the Acts of the Apostles and in the epistles of St. Paul. St. Clement is explicit: "Christ is from God, and the Apostles from Christ. Preaching from city to city and throughout the country, the Apostles appointed their first converts, testing them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons for the future Christians."<sup>1</sup> He administers a severe rebuke to the Christians of Corinth for daring "to dismiss from the ministry those who had been placed in office by the Apostles or their successors with the approval of the whole Church."<sup>2</sup>

I have before me the citations of many of the early Fathers showing a clear recognition by the infant Church of the priesthood as a divinely established office, for the reception of which the sacrament of Orders was instituted. Space permits but the following one from St. Gregory of Nyssa<sup>3</sup> who reflects the mind of all the early writers: "The same power of the word," he says, "renders sublime and honorable the priest, who, by the newness of Ordination, has been singled out from the multitude; he who was yesterday one of the people suddenly becomes a commander, a presiding officer, a teacher of righteousness, and the dispenser of hidden mysteries."<sup>4</sup>

#### *A Hierarchy*

The Council of Trent declares that there is in the Catholic Church a divinely established hierarchy of bishops, priests and deacons, and that bishops are superior to priests and possess the power of confirming and ordaining.<sup>5</sup> Since Christ established the priesthood as a permanent institution He certainly conferred upon some priests, namely, bishops, the power of communicating the priesthood to others. It is evident from the New Testament that the Apostles were bish-

<sup>1</sup>Ad Cor., 43:2.

<sup>2</sup>44:3.

<sup>3</sup>395.

<sup>4</sup>Orat. in Bapt. Christi.

<sup>5</sup>Sess. 23. Canons, 6-7.

ops, for it depicts them frequently as ordaining, which is the function characteristic of bishops. The episcopate is the completion of the priesthood.

St. Ignatius of Antioch<sup>1</sup> describes the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons, and points out clearly the divine origin of the episcopate and its superiority over the priesthood. "The college of presbyters," he writes, "adheres to the bishop as the strings to a lyre."<sup>2</sup> "Where the bishop is, there let the multitudes (of believers) be; even as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church."<sup>3</sup>

"Why don't priests marry?" is one of the questions most frequently asked by non-Catholics. The celibacy of the clergy is not a precept of the divine or natural law, nor a dogma of the Catholic Church. It is simply a disciplinary regulation of the Western Church, imposed with a view to the more effective discharge of the priestly duties and a closer approximation to the ideal of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. "He that is without a wife," says St. Paul, "is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided."<sup>4</sup> During the first three centuries there was no law of the Church enforcing celibacy. Clement of Alexandria speaks of married priests and deacons, and the historian Socrates refers to a married episcopate in the Eastern Churches. To this day the secular clergy in the Greek Catholic Church, that is the Church in communion with Rome, are married, though the bishops are celibates. In short, it is not a question of dogma, but solely of ecclesiastical discipline. On this particular point of discipline there exists a difference between the Church of the West and that of the East, though both are united in the acceptance of the dogma proclaiming the divine origin of the priesthood.

#### *A Sublime Office*

Having presented the evidence from Scripture and the writings of the early Fathers as to the divine origin of the priesthood and its essential powers, let us now briefly con-

<sup>1</sup>98-117.

<sup>2</sup>Ad Eph., 4:1.

<sup>3</sup>Ad Smyr., 8:2.

<sup>4</sup>I Cor., 7:32-33.

sider the dignity of the office, and the benefits which accrue to human society from its exercise. The priest is singled out by God who chooses him to be His ambassador to men. The words which Christ addressed to the Apostles after the Last Supper may be applied to all His priests: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain."<sup>1</sup> It was this same divine teaching which St. Paul re-echoed when he declared to the Hebrews: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was."<sup>2</sup>

The priest is called by God not only into the line of Aaron, into the tribe of Levi, into the family of Samuel, into the priesthood of Melchisedech, but into the discipleship of Jesus Christ. He is made a member of that goodly company of disciples whose sound has gone forth unto the ends of the earth. Throughout nineteen hundred years they have borne the teachings of the Divine Master into every race and every land from the frozen snows of the Arctic to the burning sands of the Sahara, and even unto the far-distant shores washed by the waves of the Australasian seas.

"Behold!" said Christ, "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." With these words echoing in their ears, the Apostles went out into the countries of the then known world, preaching the gospel fearlessly to every creature. They quailed not before the lions in the Roman arena, nor before the pitch and tar with which they were to be burned alive to illumine the gladiatorial contests of the Romans. Why? Because they realized that they were speaking not in their own names, but in the name of Jesus Christ. Because they realized that they were His divinely appointed ambassadors, clothed by the Master with plenipotentiary power to speak and teach in His name. That is why St. Paul was able to say with truth: "Let a man so regard us as ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God."<sup>3</sup>

#### *Power of Pardonning*

The second great power of the priestly office is that of pardonning. When the priest raises aloft his right hand and

<sup>1</sup>John, 15:16.

<sup>2</sup>Heb., 5:4.

<sup>3</sup>I Cor. 4:1.

pronounces the words of pardon over the sinner in the tribunal of confession, the shackles of sin are torn from the soul of the penitent. The priest pardons as effectively as if the words fell from the lips of Christ. It is a power which transcends that of kings and emperors. The power of kings is over the bodies of men. But they stand impotent before the kingdom of the soul. The hand of the priest reaches up beyond the horizon of the sky, and with golden keys unlocks the treasury of God's mercy and forgiveness and applies them to the souls of men.

The priest preserves inviolate the secrecy of the confessional even at the cost of life itself. Under no circumstances does he ever reveal the slightest imperfection breathed into his ear in confession. The sacrifice which every Catholic priest stands ready to make to preserve this trust inviolate is illustrated by the following historical incident. In 1899 Father Dumoulin, a French priest, was charged with the crime of murder. The sexton had murdered and robbed a wealthy woman. To throw suspicion from himself he dipped the smoking revolver in the victim's blood and placed it in Father Dumoulin's room. Then to seal the lips of the priest, he went to confession to Father Dumoulin, accusing himself of the murder.

Circumstantial evidence pointed to the priest. Knowing how secure he was behind that sacramental seal, knowing that the priest could not open those lips to reveal the guilty person even to save his own life, the sexton gave testimony convicting the priest. He was given a sentence that was worse than death—life imprisonment at hard labor on Devil's Island under the tropical sun, whither France sends her worst criminals. Suffering the loss of his good name, the ostracism of his friends and a public ignominy that was more painful than death itself, Father Dumoulin, like the good priest, remained faithful to his trust.

For twenty-five years he toiled under the burning rays of the tropical sun among the outcasts of mankind, guarding ever the secret in his bosom. In those twenty-five years he saw his mother die of a broken heart, carrying to her grave the blight of her son's imprisonment. Twenty-five years of grinding convict toil had left him with grey hair, a face



deeply lined, a body broken and bent, on the edge of the grave.

In a wretched hovel in a slum district in Paris a man lying on a bare cot is calling hysterically for a priest before he dies. As the priest enters, he shouts aloud: "I am guilty of the murder for which Father Dumoulin was condemned. I sealed his lips with confession and threw the guilt on him." Unwilling to face his God with that foul crime upon his soul, he seeks forgiveness through the very agency of confession whose inviolable secrecy he had perverted to convict an innocent priest. What a tardy retribution, that could not undo those twenty-five years of mental torture, that could not recall the dead from their graves, nor reveal to them his innocence. And yet that is precisely what every priest in Christendom would willingly undergo rather than reveal the tiniest venial sin breathed into his ear in confession. Such is the absolute, impenetrable and inviolable secrecy with which a priest guards the contents of every confession.

#### *Power of Consecrating*

The third great power of the priestly office is the climax of all. It is the power of consecrating. "No act is greater," says St. Thomas, "than the consecration of the body of Christ." In this essential phase of the sacred ministry, the power of the priest is not surpassed by that of the bishop, the archbishop, the cardinal or the pope. Indeed it is equal to that of Jesus Christ. For in this role the priest speaks with the voice and the authority of God Himself.

When the priest pronounces the tremendous words of consecration, he reaches up into the heavens, brings Christ down from His throne, and places Him upon our altar to be offered up again as the victim for the sins of man. It is a power greater than that of monarchs and emperors. It is greater than that of saints and angels, greater than that of Seraphim and Cherubim. Indeed it is greater even than the power of the Virgin Mary. For, while the Blessed Virgin was the human agency by which Christ became incarnate a single time, the priest brings Christ down from Heaven, and renders Him present on our altar as the eternal Victim for the sins of man—not once but a thousand times! The priest speaks and lo! Christ, the eternal and omnipotent God, bows His head in humble obedience to the priest's command.

Of what sublime dignity is the office of the Christian priest who is thus privileged to act as the ambassador and the vicerent of Christ on earth. He continues the essential ministry of Christ—he teaches the faithful with the authority of Christ, he pardons the penitent sinner with the power of Christ, he offers up again the same sacrifice of adoration and atonement which Christ offered on Calvary. No wonder that the name which spiritual writers are especially fond of applying to the priest is that of "alter Christus." For the priest is and should be another Christ. The priesthood is a sublime ministry, more meet for angels than for weak and sinful men. Truly indeed did Isaiah proclaim with prophetic insight six hundred years before Christ the grandeur of the Christian priesthood in those inspired words: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace; of him that showeth forth good, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion: Thy God shall reign."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Altar and Priest*

Is it not apparent to every person, regardless of religious affiliation, who has followed this discussion with an open mind, that the Christian priesthood is an institution founded by Jesus Christ whereby men receive the power and authority to preach the gospel, to reconcile sinners and to offer sacrifice to the Most High? When Luther discarded the office of the priesthood, the confessional as a tribunal for the reconciliation of sinners, and the altar with its august sacrifice of the Mass, disappeared. Now in the churches of our separated brethren there remain but the four bare walls and a pulpit. While the highest element of worship, the offering of sacrifice, has completely vanished, even the other elements of worship are fast disappearing. Listen to the words addressed by Dr. Edmund S. Conklin to the ministers of our country: "After no small amount of observation, reading, and careful inquiry, I am forced to the conclusion that worship as a religious exercise is disappearing from Protestant Churches."<sup>2</sup>

Is it not apparent that this decay of worship in the

<sup>1</sup>Isaiah, 52:7.

<sup>2</sup>The Christian Century, July 11, 1934.

Churches of our non-Catholic friends is due primarily to their abandonment of the priestly office? Is it not also apparent that the great decline in church attendance deplored by ministers throughout the country is traceable to the discarding of the priesthood and the consequent disappearance of sacrifice and worship? More and more such churches are ceasing to be temples for the worship of God and are becoming lecture halls for the discussion of political, social and economic problems. But man does not live by bread alone. In the unfathomable depths of his nature, he strives now, as in the days of Cain and Abel and of Melchisedech, to offer sacrifice and worship to his God and Maker. Deep still calleth unto deep.

In the priesthood of the Catholic Church he will find a divinely established agency, through which that deep and ineradicable hunger of his nature will find adequate satisfaction. In that Church the searcher after truth will find not only preaching and prayers and the singing of hymns, but more than that—altar and priest, worship and sacrifice. For in the memory of the priest within that Church there echo the solemn words addressed by Jesus Christ to His first priests, the Apostles, at the Last Supper: "Do ye this in commemoration of me." In faithful compliance with that divine command, the priest offers up each day in all the countries of the world the august sacrifice of the Mass, saying in the words of the psalmist: "I will take the chalice of salvation and I will call upon the name of the Lord."

### Discussion Aids

What is the Sacrament of Holy Orders? When and by Whom was it first conferred? What great power was given at this first ordination? When was the second great power conferred by Christ? What third power was conferred on the Apostles by Christ? When was it given? Is this third power as distinctively a priestly power as the other two? Quote some scriptural texts showing the use of the Sacrament of Holy Orders in the Apostolic Church. What did the Council of Trent say about the Catholic hierarchy? St. Ignatius of Antioch? Why do not priests marry? Is the law of celibacy a matter of divine law or ecclesiastical discipline? Discuss the secrecy of the confessional and give an example.

Discuss the power of consecration and the necessity of this power for sacrifice, the essential act of worship. Sum up the case for Holy Orders.

### Practices:

Pray daily for all priests.

Distinguish between the office and the man. Honor all priests because of the powers God has conferred on them for our salvation.

When a priest visits your home ask for his blessing.

## Chapter XXII

## EXTREME UNCTION

*A Sacrament Little Understood By Non-Catholics*

One of the sacraments which is but little understood by those outside the Catholic Church is Extreme Unction, as the following incident would seem to indicate. Some years ago I listened to an exposition of the Catholic religion to a large audience in Hyde Park, London, by Mr. Francis Sheed, a leader in the work of the Catholic Evidence Guild in England. After the lecture, questions concerning any phase of the Catholic religion were invited. Whereupon one man in the crowd of some five hundred spoke up: "I read in the newspaper that a Catholic priest gave Extreme Unction to a sick lady and that she died after receiving it. How can you justify such cruelty on the part of your priests?" "What do you think the priest did when he administered Extreme Unction?" inquired Mr. Sheed. "Well," replied the questioner, "I judged from the fact that it was *extreme* and that the lady died after getting it, that it must have been kind of a pummeling or beating."

While probably few non-Catholics in America would guess Extreme Unction to be any kind of a beating, it is equally probable that exceedingly few of them understand what it really is. Let us then consider the nature of this sacrament, its purpose, and its establishment by Jesus Christ.

Extreme Unction is a sacrament in which the sick by the anointing with holy oil and the prayers of the priest, receive spiritual aid and even physical invigoration when such is conducive to their salvation. This unction is called *Extreme*, because it is administered to persons who are in extreme or grave danger of death, and is usually the last of the holy anointings administered by the Church. The first anointing is received in Baptism, and the second in Confirmation.

The Apostle, St. James, refers to this sacrament: "Is any man sick among you; let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man; and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."<sup>1</sup> In these words St. James describes the essential characteristics of a sacrament. The anointing with oil and the prayer of the priest constitutes the visible sign which confers upon the soul the sanctifying grace causing the remission of sin.

*Testimony of the Fathers*

The Fathers of the early Church make numerous allusions to this sacrament. Thus Origen (185-255) speaks of it as a complement of Penance in his homily on *Leviticus*, saying: "There is also a remission of sins through penitence, when the sinner. . . is not ashamed to declare his sin to the Priest of the Lord, and to seek a remedy. . . wherein that also is fulfilled which the Apostle James saith: 'But if any be sick among you, let him call in the Priests of the Church, and let them impose hands on him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.'"<sup>2</sup>

In his treatise on the Priesthood<sup>3</sup> St. John Chrysostom draws a comparison between the power of priests and that of parents. "Our parents beget us into this life," he writes, "and the priests unto the other. Parents, moreover, can neither ward off bodily death from us, nor repulse impending disease. But priests often heal the soul when it is sick and about to perish, rendering milder the punishment of some and preventing others altogether from falling; and doing this not by teaching only, but by the aid of prayer. And not only when they regenerate us (Baptism) do they pardon our sins, but they also have power to forgive sins committed afterwards: for St. James says: 'Is any one sick among you,' etc. Since Extreme Unction remits sin, it must have been instituted not by the Church but by Christ who alone can confer sanctifying grace.

In a letter written in 416 to Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio, Pope Innocent I cites the words of St. James to prove that

<sup>1</sup>James 5:14-15.

<sup>2</sup>Homil. ii:43.

<sup>3</sup>John Chrysostom *Lb. 3 de Sacrad.*



Extreme Unction is a sacrament on a par with Penance and the Eucharist. He further states that while the oil is to be blessed solely by the Bishop, the sacrament can be administered by either priests or bishops, and that it remits sin.

*The Liturgy Bears Witness*

The Sacramentary of Serapeon, Bishop of Thmuis in Egypt, was written in the first quarter of the fourth century. In this liturgical ritual there is found a prayer for the blessing of the oil of the sick, which shows that Extreme Unction was administered in those early days as in our own for its healing effect upon both soul and body. It reads as follows:—"We invoke Thee. . . Father of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and we pray that Thou wilt send a healing power of the Only-Begotten from heaven upon this oil, that it may become for those anointed. . . a casting out of every disease, an antidote against every demon. . . good grace and the remission of sins, a medicine of life and safety, health and integrity of soul, body and spirit, a perfect strengthening."<sup>1</sup>

In the West the Gelasian Sacramentary (735) and the Gregorian Sacramentary (795) both contain prayers for the blessing of the oil of the sick. They beseech God not only "to heal all the sick person's ills, but to have mercy on all his iniquities; that he may feel Thy medicine not only in his body but also in his soul." These liturgical rituals of both East and West afford an authentic insight into the teaching and practice of the early Church. For the prayers of the Church constitute an unfailing index of her belief.

It should be noted that the Greek Church which separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the ninth century is equally insistent upon the sacramental character of Extreme Unction. In its profession of faith, it states: "The seventh Sacrament is Extreme Unction, prescribed by Christ; for, after He had begun to send His disciples two and two,<sup>2</sup> they anointed and healed many, which unction the Church has since maintained by pious usage, as we learn from the Epistle of St. James: 'Is any man sick among you,' etc. The fruits proper to this Sacrament, as St. James declares, are the remission of sins, health of soul, strength—in fine, of

<sup>1</sup>Dictionnaire d'Archéologie et Liturgie, v. 1032.

<sup>2</sup>Mark 6:7-13.

body. But though it does not always produce this last result, it always, at least, restores the soul to a better state by the forgiveness of sins." All the other Oriental churches, some of which separated from Rome as far back as the fifth century, likewise list Extreme Unction among their seven sacraments. Does not such identity of doctrine, proclaimed for so many centuries by churches widely separated, offer unmistakable evidence of its apostolic origin? Is it not convincing proof that this sacrament was instituted by no other than by Jesus Christ, the divine Founder of the Christian religion?

*Effects of Sacrament*

This sacrament is administered to the sick man by anointing his eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands and feet with olive oil blessed by the bishop, while the priest says: "Through this holy unction and His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever faults thou hast committed by sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and walking." If death be imminent, and there is no time for all the anointings, one on the forehead will suffice with the words: "By this holy unction may the Lord pardon thee whatever faults thou hast committed." The sacrament is administered only to those who are dangerously ill, and is never given to soldiers going to battle or to criminals about to be executed.

The chief effects of the sacrament, as enumerated by the Council of Trent, are the conferring of grace, the remission of sins, and the alleviation of the sick. "This effect," declares the Council, "is the grace of the Holy Ghost, whose unction blots out sins, if any remain to be expiated, and the consequences of sin, and alleviates and strengthens the soul of the sick person, by exciting in him a great confidence in the Divine mercy, sustained by which he bears more lightly the troubles and sufferings of disease, and more easily resists temptations. . . and sometimes, when it is expedient for his soul's salvation, recovers bodily health."

The conferring of the grace of fortitude is its primary effect, its secondary effect is the remission of sin. Being a sacrament of the living, it supposes the recipient to be free from mortal sin. But if the sick man be in grievous sin, is unable to confess them, and has only imperfect sorrow for them, it also remits them.

This sacrament should not be deferred until the last moment when the patient is unconscious. It should be administered while the patient is conscious and able to unite his prayers with those of the priest. The conferring of this sacrament does not necessarily indicate that the person is about to die. It should be remembered that one of its purposes is to assist the patient to recover his health. If we do not hesitate to call in the physician to minister to the needs of the body, why should we hesitate to call in the priest who ministers to the needs of both body and soul? "For surely a spiritual medicine," says Cardinal Gibbons, "which diminishes the terrors of death, comforts the dying Christian, fortifies the soul in its final struggle, and purifies it for its passage from time to eternity, should be gratefully and eagerly made use of, especially when prescribed by an inspired Physician."

There is a touching picture which the evangelist, St. John, draws for us of a scene which occurred on the hillsides of Galilee. With His disciples the Master has just come from Judea into Galilee when he is met by a certain ruler. He is a high officer of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. His heart is torn with grief, for his son lies at home in Capharnaum at the point of death. Though not one of the followers of the Saviour, he has heard of the wonderful cures He has wrought in Judea and Samaria, healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansing the leper, curing the halt and the lame. Stranger that he is, his paternal solicitude for his dying son thrusts him into the Master's presence, as he cries out in words of poignant yearning: "Lord, come down before that my son die." How tenderly Jesus turns to him with the consoling words: "Go thy way, thy son liveth."

With the haunting melody of the Master's mercy reverberating in the memory of the race, mankind has for nineteen centuries turned its wistful eyes to the Saviour, and at the imminence of death has echoed the age old cry of the ruler of ancient Galilee: "Lord, come down before that my son die." For nineteen hundred years the Master has been answering that cry by soothing the feverish brow of the sick and giving strength and courage to the dying in the sacrament of Extreme Unction. It is the divinely established means for

conveying the clemency and succour of the Saviour to the sick and the dying.

### *Robbing Death of Its Sting*

Many years ago I had occasion to assist a pastor up in the mining region of Pennsylvania during the Christmas season. After the Mass on Christmas morning a sick call came. I answered it for the elderly pastor. It took me to a little cottage where a father lay dying. For twenty-five years he had labored in the black pits of the mines, and as sometimes happens, the air laden with the fine dust of the coal had coated his lungs so that he was dying from what is known as "miner's consumption." The face was haggard and drawn with suffering. In his deep-set eyes one saw a look of sadness tinged with latent rebellion against his lot. One heard the merry jingle of sleigh bells outside, the cheery echoing of Christmas carols, spreading their message of Yuletide joy and gladness far and wide. Through the window one saw the people passing by, with their arms loaded with Christmas presents, greeting one another with a "Merry Christmas."

"Father," he said, "it doesn't seem that I'm getting a square deal. Others are happy with their Christmas joy, while I'm being pulled down to the grave with this hacking cough in my chest." I spoke to him as best I could of the mercy and the love of God and of His ability to compensate for the inequalities of happiness here. Then I relied upon the sacraments to accomplish that for which my words were all too feeble. After hearing his confession and giving him the Holy Viaticum, I anointed him with the holy oils and gave him the last blessing. While imparting the blessing, and having him repeat after me the words: "Lord, here burn, here cut, but spare me for eternity," I noticed that a new fervor crept into his voice, and a look of peace and serenity softened the hard lines of his face.

As I was about to go, he clasped my hand with a rugged tenderness. "Father," he said, pointing to the people outside hurrying to the church, "they are going to see the Christmas crib on the altar, aren't they? But soon I may be able to see the Christ Child Himself." Only the finger of God extended through the sacrament of the anointing could

effect a transformation as touching as it was inspiring. Only the life-giving grace of the sacraments that tap the infinite treasury of the divine exchequer could infuse such a transmuting sweetness into the angry hearts and rebellious souls of men.

The devastating hand of death comes to ravage every fireside and to snuff at last the breath from every mortal. But death is robbed of its sting and the grave of its victory by this great sacrament of the unction, which infuses the divine strength into the dying children of men. It comes with its unfailing reenforcement at the greatest crisis in human life. The sacrament of Extreme Unction is the stretching forth of the hand of God from the regions of the other world across the desert of time and space, seeking to clasp our weary hand in His to guide us gently and sweetly up out of the valley of darkness and death to the beautiful sun-kissed mountain peaks of the everlasting and eternal day.

### Discussion Aids

Define Extreme Unction. Why *Extreme*? Where do we find it mentioned in the New Testament? Give the testimony of some of the early Fathers on Extreme Unction; of the Liturgy. When may Extreme Unction not be administered even though there is danger of death? What are the effects of this sacrament?

### Practices:

Always have on hand the articles necessary for a priest's visit in case of serious illness, and have the table prepared for his call.

Send for a priest if possible while the patient is still conscious.

If you witness an accident make it your business to summon a priest if the injured person is a Catholic.

## Part IV

### THE CHURCH AND MARRIAGE

#### Guidance in the Quest for Happiness



## Chapter XXIII

### IS THE CHURCH WOMAN'S ENEMY?

#### *Marriage and the "Newer Freedom" for Women*

"The Catholic Church is reactionary. She stands in the way of complete emancipation of womanhood. She opposes companionate marriage, trial marriage and divorce. She insists upon the old doctrine of the sanctity of conjugal vows and the indissolubility of the marriage tie. Upon her rests so heavily the dead hand of the past as to crush out all receptivity to the stirrings of modern thought.

"Before the eyes of womanhood there looms up a new world of freedom, while the Church still chains them to the conventions of an outmoded past. Her views on marriage are old-fashioned and out of step with the progressive temper of to-day. Her stand against divorce under all circumstances bars the way to happiness for multitudes who discover only after marriage that they are mismated. In short, the Church is not the friend but the enemy of womanhood in this modern day."

These were the words that fell from the lips of an advocate of the so-called "newer freedom" for women. Disgruntled over the unmodified stand of the Church against divorce and remarriage, she regarded it as placing a barrier to her finding happiness in another marriage. As she blurted out her philippic to her pastor, a pained expression came over his venerable countenance. He had not forgotten all the history he had read. As the bitter words, "The Church is not the friend but the enemy of womanhood," echoed in his ears, a far-away look came into his eyes. The walls of the rectory seemed to fade away. In their place there came a series of other and different scenes.

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#### *Clement VII Defends Catherine*

It is a room on Hampton Courts, the summer home of Henry VIII, along the Thames in England, on a late October

day in 1527. Among the maids-in-waiting to the Queen, Catherine of Aragon, Henry spies a new face. It is the pretty face of Anne Boleyn. Those thick, sensuous lips, those lustful eyes that follow her, tell of the secret design already forming in his brain. He has already had his intrigue with her older sister Mary. But Anne refuses his advances unless she be the acknowledged Queen, seated beside him on the royal throne. To satisfy that lustful passion, Henry casts aside his faithful wife, Catherine, and pounds on the doors of the Papacy with the imperious demand: "Give me a divorce from Catherine that I may marry Anne Boleyn. If you dare refuse, I will not only leave the Church, but I'll pull all England with me."

Clement VII knew full well that it was no idle threat. On the one side stood arrayed the King, the lords and nobles, the house of Parliament, the sycophantic Wolsey and Cromwell, in fact, all the powers of imperial England. On the other side stood, deserted and alone, the weeping figure of Catherine. But the low sobbing of Catherine was heard above the thunders of the King. True to his divine office, the Vicar of Christ stood by the defenseless Catherine and to the insolent challenge of the King flung the answer: "Not for you, nor for the whole of England, will I violate that divine command: 'What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.' Catherine remains thy lawful wife until God's angels lower upon thee the final curtain of death."

By force Henry pulled nearly the whole of England into his apostasy, setting up a church of his own and constituting himself the supreme spiritual head. Clement, however, old and venerable though he was, wavered not for an instant but stood like a rock of adamant in defense of Catherine. Single-handed and alone, among all the voices of Europe and all the powers of Christendom, the vicar of Christ stood pleading the cause of weak and defenseless womanhood, cast aside by the whimsical lusts and the cruel passions of man.

#### *Pius VII vs. Napoleon*

The slanting rays of the setting sun are gilding with golden hues the twin spires of the great Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. Down below in the Champs Elysees throngs

of people are making merry. It is the eve of the coronation of the great Napoleon. In his chamber at the Tuileries, Pius VII, forced by the Emperor to Paris, is kneeling in prayer. A gentle knock is heard at the door. Calling, "Come in," he rises. Josephine, weeping bitterly, enters and falls at his feet. "Holy Father," she whispers, "our marriage has never been blessed by the Church."

Instantly Pius VII summoned Napoleon and bade him have his marriage ratified according to the laws of God and of His Church. Bonaparte demurred. Then that aged Pontiff, broken by years of persecution and injustice, thin, feeble, and emaciated, looked into the face of the conqueror of Europe. The eyes of Pius VII flashed fire, and straightening himself up, he said to the man who had changed the map of Europe, the Marshall who was still flushed with the victories of Marengo and Austerlitz—that feeble and emaciated old man hurled into the face of the most powerful and arrogant ruler of all Europe the fearless ultimatum: "Either you marry Josephine before the sun sets in yonder sky, or by the tiara that I wear and the sceptre that I wield, I shall refuse to crown you tomorrow in the Cathedral of Notre Dame as the Emperor of France."

Before the last rays of the setting sun faded from the skies above the purple waters of the Seine, Napoleon knelt by the side of Josephine to receive from Cardinal Fesch the sacrament which is both the shield of womanhood and the protection of the Christian home. Once again the Church, in the person of the Vicar of Christ, stood out single-handed and alone against the most powerful potentate in all Europe in defense of weak and helpless womanhood.

#### *Ingeburga Appeals to Rome*

The curtain of the centuries is raised. It is an August day in 1193 at Amiens, France. With stately ceremony and amid the rejoicing of the people, Philip II is plighting his deathless troth to his queenly bride, the daughter of Valdemar I, King of Denmark. In the presence of William of Champagne, the Archbishop of Reims, before the altar of the Lord, Philip promises to take Ingeburga for his lawful wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for

worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do them part.

The very day after the wedding, however, his fancy changes. The lovely queen, who had left the royal palace in Denmark to come at his invitation and live as his queen in a strange land among a people speaking an alien tongue, he wishes to cast ruthlessly aside. He summons the Council of Compiègne and demands a declaration of nullity of his marriage. The assembly of complaisant barons and bishops accedes to his demand. Philip, triumphant, marries his new innamorata, Agnes de Meran. The queen is imprisoned in the chateau at Etampes. Deserted and alone, far from her father's home, Ingeburga finds herself without a single powerful friend in all France.

In this crisis she turns instinctively toward Rome. In her broken French, she cries, "I appeal from the verdict of the Council of Compiègne to the Vicar of Christ, the Protector of defenseless womanhood everywhere." That cry of Ingeburga from her prison at Etampes was heard across the Alps by the sentinel on the watchtowers of the Vatican. Without a moment's hesitation, Pope Innocent III threw himself into the unequal struggle on the side of truth and justice and in defense of the rights of womanhood. Into the face of the lustful monarch, the Pontiff flung the fearless ultimatum: "Either you respect your sworn vow of deathless fidelity and restore Ingeburga to her rightful place beside you on the royal throne, or I, as the Vicar of Christ, shall cut you off as one unworthy of membership in the Church of the living God."

Philip demurred. True to his word, the Pontiff promptly excommunicated the king. When he still refused, Innocent III brought into action his most powerful spiritual weapon and placed all France under interdict. Until nine months later, when Philip feigned reconciliation with Ingeburga, first before the papal legate, Octavian, and then before the Council of Coissons, not a single Mass was permitted to be celebrated in all France. As a protest against the injustice done to her and to redress her wrongs, the Pontiff took this desperate step. It served to arouse the conscience of the nation against the cruel injustice of the king.

This the Pontiff did in defense of the rights of a single woman, a stranger in an alien land, helpless and alone, weeping in her prison at Etampes. At last, after fifteen years of struggle with the stubborn and lustful monarch, victory crowned the efforts of the Pontiff. Ingeburga was restored to her rightful place as Queen on the royal throne of France.

Once again, the Church, in the person of the Vicar of Christ, stands out before the eyes of the world as the solitary, fearless champion of the rights of womanhood. Once again the Church emerges triumphant in her struggle with the lustful kings, the most powerful in all Europe, who sought to trample under foot the rights, the dignity, and the honor of womanhood. That was not merely Catherine of Aragon kneeling at the feet of Clement VII, nor Josephine de Beauharnais at the feet of Pius VII, nor Ingeburga at the feet of Innocent III. They are but the symbols of womanhood everywhere. It was womanhood in all the ages and in all the countries of Christendom kneeling at the feet of Christ's Vicar, receiving protection from the passions and the lewdness of men.

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The kindly old pastor came back with a start from his historical reminiscing. "The Church, the enemy of woman?" he queried of his visitor. "Why," he continued, "all that separates woman from the menial position she occupied under paganism as a chattel ministering to the passions of man is the influence of the Christian Church. The one institution in a world of change which has unceasingly championed the rights of womanhood is the Church founded by Jesus Christ. To that Church woman is indebted for the unique dignity and reverence she enjoys throughout Christendom today. No one can charge the Church with indifference to the rights and the happiness of womanhood without being blind to the most obvious lesson of history for the last two thousand years."

#### *Marlborough-Vanderbilt Case*

After reading the historical incidents just sketched, some readers, particularly among our dear non-Catholic friends, may feel inclined to say: "That is all right for the past. But how about today? While the Church theoretically



forbids divorce today, she practically allows it by her system of annulments and dispensations. Look, for example, at her setting aside the marriage of the Duke of Marlborough and Miss Consuelo Vanderbilt."

The answer is: The Church has not swerved, either in theory or in practice, from her historic stand in support of Christ's teaching concerning the absolute indissolubility of Christian marriage. It is true that the Church grants dispensations. But these are never from the natural or the divine law but only from those of her own making. Unlike the modern State, she never declares a valid marriage to be null and void. She merely declares, after careful investigation, that a so-called marriage never actually occurred—that it was invalid from the beginning. Much of the misunderstanding in the public mind concerning the Church's declarations of nullity is due to an ignorance both of the facts in the case and of the Church's laws regulating marriage. For, like the State, the Church has not one, but many laws designed to clarify and safeguard the marital contract.

Now what are the actual facts in the Marlborough-Vanderbilt case? Briefly these: The bride's mother, the Duke of Marlborough, Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, Mrs. Jay and Mrs. Tiffany swore before the Tribunal of the Rota, the Church's Supreme Court for matrimonial cases in Rome, that the bride, Consuelo Vanderbilt, had been coerced into the marriage and had never consented to it even afterwards. On the strength of such sworn testimony, the Rota declared the marriage to have been null and void from the beginning. The Church's law on the subject is unmistakably clear: "A marriage is invalid, if entered into because of violence or grave fears, inflicted unjustly and from without, to escape which one is forced to choose marriage."<sup>1</sup> Surely no fair-minded person can criticize the Church for having rendered a decision that squared with both the law and the established facts in this particular case.

#### *Marconi-O'Brien*

Why was the Marconi-O'Brien marriage declared null? Was it not because of the powerful influences exercised by the parties concerned? Such are the questions frequently

<sup>1</sup>Canon 1087.

asked by people whose knowledge of the case rests solely upon the reading of a newspaper item. The facts in the case are briefly these: The declaration of nullity was issued because both parties made its dissolubility a requisite condition of their consent. On the grounds that some marriages turn out badly, the mother of the bride refused at first to permit her daughter to wed if the marriage were to be considered indissoluble. Mr. Marconi made an explicit agreement with the mother, the daughter, and the whole family, in which he stated that either party could apply for divorce, if at any time he or she saw fit.

Such a reservation was in direct violation of the Church's law which states: "If either party or both by a positive act of the will exclude the marriage itself. . . or any essential property of marriage, the contract is invalid."<sup>1</sup> Since indissolubility is an essential property of marriage, it is evident that the marriage was null and void from the beginning. Such was the only decision the Rota could give in the light of the facts and the law in the case.

#### *No Discrimination*

The Church does not have one law for the rich and another for the poor. Nor is she swayed in her decisions by any consideration of wealth or influence. With an eye single to the facts in the case, she metes out even-handed justice to king and peasant alike. Before her judicial tribunals the ragged pauper is the equal of the millionaire. When that influential nobleman of France, Count Boni de Castellane, sought an annulment of his marriage to the wealthy American, Anna Gould, the Rota, after three hearings of the case, returned a final and irrevocable "No."

To the rich and powerful who seek annulments not warranted by the realities of the case, the Church replies today in the same manner in which Pius VII answered Napoleon's request for the invalidation of the marriage which his brother Jerome had contracted with Miss Patterson of Baltimore. "Your Majesty will understand," wrote the Pope, "that upon the information thus far received by us it is not in our power to pronounce a sentence of nullity. We cannot utter a judgment in opposition to the rules of the Church, and we could

<sup>1</sup>Canon 1084, No. 2.

not, without laying aside those rules, decree the invalidity of a union which, according to the Word of God, no human power can sunder."

With our courts tearing asunder the sacred ties of marriage, until one out of every six homes in our land is disrupted, far-seeing statesmen of every faith are beginning to recognize, in the Church's unswerving stand against divorce, the strongest influence for the preservation of the home and the stabilization of the social order. Conscious of the social tragedies and the heartaches which follow in the wake of broken firesides, non-Catholics in America and throughout the whole of Christendom in increasing numbers will add their hearty endorsement to the words of Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical *Arcanum*. "It must be allowed," he writes, "that the Catholic Church has been of the highest service to the well-being of all peoples, by her constant defense of the sanctity and perpetuity of marriage. She deserves no small thanks for openly protesting against the civil laws which offended so grievously in this matter a century ago. . . and for rejecting even in the early ages the imperial laws in favor of divorce and putting away. And when the Roman Pontiffs withstood the most potent princes who sought with threats to obtain the Church's approval of their divorces, *they fought not only for the safety of religion but for that of civilization.*"

#### *Few Annulments*

Hostile critics often picture the Roman Rota as granting annulments with so lavish a hand as to destroy at least in practice the permanence of the marital bond. They do not know with what painstaking care that tribunal investigates every case, nor the infrequency with which an annulment is granted. Thus, during a recent five year period, this court, which hears cases for the whole world, granted only 98 decrees of nullity. Compare this with the record in our own country, where approximately 150,000 divorces are granted in a single year!

Can any fair-minded person, in the light of the actual evidence, honestly say that the Church's practice in regard to the safeguarding of the marriage bond does not square with her teaching? Where is the court, or institution, or tribunal which guards with such ceaseless vigilance the unity and the

permanence of the marriage contract? The Church not only believes in this teaching of Christ as an abstract ideal, but, more than that, she *practices* it. She weaves the golden thread of that glorious ideal into the warp and woof of the daily life of her children spread throughout the world.

In defending the sacredness and the enduring character of Christian marriage, the Church is championing the sanctity of the home and particularly the rights and the happiness of woman. For the mother in the great majority of instances suffers the most from the disruption of the home. Aging more rapidly than man, she usually finds it more difficult to contract a new alliance. Particularly is this true when she has offspring. With fewer opportunities for employment with which to support herself and her children, she is generally the greatest victim of the tragedy of a broken home.

#### *A Contrast*

If one wishes to gauge the influence of the Church's teaching concerning the rights of womanhood, he should visit some of the Mohammedan, Brahmin, or Buddhist countries where Christianity has scarcely penetrated. The contrast between the status of woman in those lands and in our Christian civilization he would find most striking. In sailing in the summer of 1925 up the Straits of the Dardanelles and across the sea of Marmora, the writer noticed down in the hold of the vessel a number of Turkish families, who were returning from Greece to Constantinople. They lived amid a squalor rarely found in our Christian countries.

In one corner there was a little group of six women and one man eating out of a single large bowl. The faces of the women were veiled down to their mouths. Upon inquiry as to the relationship existing among the members of such an unusual combination, the writer was informed that the women were the six wives of the Turk. Squatted on the floor, ministering to their master like slaves, they presented a revealing picture of the condition of woman under paganism—a condition which exists to a large extent still in non-Christian lands. Let the advocates of the so-called "newer freedom" for woman compare her degraded status in such countries where she is still a serf doing the drudgery of her lord

and a plaything ministering to his lust, with the position of dignity and reverence which she enjoys in Christian countries.

Let the women who chafe under the law of Christ concerning the permanent unity of marriage visit the excavated cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii. In those old Roman homes dating from the pagan era, they will see the quarters set aside for the *hetairai*, the minor wives, upon whom the head of the household frequently lavished the greatest luxury. Let them then decide if they would destroy the solitary lever which has lifted womanhood from the foul morass of pagan lechery to the position of honor and reverence which she enjoys today. That lever is the teaching of Christ—a teaching which His Church has held for nineteen centuries as a beacon light to guide the groping feet of mankind from the darkness of paganism to the refinement of Christian life and culture.

#### *Mary's Influence*

Supplementing the teaching of Christ, in elevating woman to her new dignity, has been the influence of that model of womanly virtue and beauty, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Saviour. Mankind is influenced more by ideals than by ideas. Human hearts and minds are impressed more profoundly by concrete living exemplifications of virtue than by its enunciation in abstract terms. Since the time of Christ, Mary has been the model of virtue for the maiden, wife, and mother. Alone among all our race, she unites in herself the twin glories of virginity and motherhood. Painters and sculptors, poets and historians, have vied with one another in seeking to portray the charm of her virginal innocence and maternal love.

From the time when as a helpless Babe, cradled in her arms, breathing the perfume of His breath into the roses of her cheeks, until the hour when He hung limp upon Calvary's cross, Jesus paid to His mother the tribute of His honor, reverence and love. The Master's example has been contagious, and mankind has sought humbly to follow in His steps. Reverenced as the ideal among God's children, "our tainted nature's solitary boast," as the non-Catholic poet, Wordsworth, styled her, Mary has elevated all womanhood to a new position of honor and dignity in the eyes of men.

#### *Beauty of Holiness*

The superiority of the spiritual charm and beauty of Mary's character over any of the ideals influencing the art and thinking of ancient Greece is eloquently portrayed by Frederick A. Stowe, who bears the testimony of scholars outside the fold. "No theme," he writes, "has stirred to greater depths the passion of men than a mother's love, yet centuries passed before the artists could even suggest the heights and depths of her devotion. The Greek ideal was Juno or Venus or Phryne. Out of white marble, the Greek sculptor hewed images of wondrous beauty and faultless form. His ideal was transmitted like frozen music. It appealed to the sensuous and evoked the rapturous adulation of the heroic, but the Greek face was soulless. Aenone, deserted on Ida's mountain, weeping for her Paris, was all Greek poesy could give. It was not until Raphael painted his Madonna that the world was given its beautiful ideal of womanhood. Venus had a lover, but Mary brooded over her child. Venus reveled in a dying world; Mary had a soul, and upon her brow settled the holiness of beauty and the beauty of holiness. No dryad on the mountain, no nereid in the laughing sea or Diana at the chase with quiver and bow could affect the queenly grace and divine wardenship which was the charm of Mary. Her face was illuminated by an inner light unknown to Venus or Juno, and Mary survives to the latest generation as the gentlest name in history."

In tracing the transformation in the moral status of woman wrought by Christianity, Cardinal Gibbons likewise stresses the influence of the ideal of the Virgin Mother. "The influence of Mary in the moral elevation of woman," he points out, "can hardly be overestimated. She is the perfect combination of all that is great and good and noble in pagan womanhood, with no alloy of degradation."

#### *A Rock of Gibraltar*

The enumeration of the thousand subtle ways in which the ideal of the chaste beauty of Mary's character became indelibly stamped upon the intellect and heart and imagination of Christendom would fill many a volume. Suffice it to say that second only to the direct teachings of Christ on the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage, has been the in-



fluence of the ideal of the chaste Mother of God in the elevation and spiritual enfranchisement of womanhood throughout all Christendom.

Are we not compelled, therefore, to say that those who picture the Church as closing the door to the "newer freedom" for women and as placing a barrier to her happiness by insisting upon Christ's teaching concerning the sacredness of the family fireside and the permanence of the Christian home are not only shortsighted but are blind to the most obvious lessons of history? Does not the experience of humanity the world over demonstrate that lasting happiness can never be secured by the violation of God's law?

True, siren voices still whisper of forbidden fruit. Will-o-the-wisps still beckon to new and untried paths. *Ignes fatui* still shed their deceptive gleams to lure the unwary traveler to the pitfalls and quicksands of the morass. But reflection and sober second thought will prompt woman not to ignore the voices of, all human experience warning her that such paths lead but to misery and disaster. In the Catholic Church she will recognize her best and staunchest friend throughout the centuries. In clinging to that Church she will find a bulwark of protection from the lewdness and the lust of man, and a mighty Rock of Gibraltar against which the waves of human passion will beat—but beat forever in vain.

#### Discussion Aids

Tell the story of Pope Clement VII's defence of the validity of the marriage of Catherine of Aragon and Henry VIII of England. Tell the story of Pope Pius VII's defence of Josephine; of Pope Innocent III's defence of Ingeburga. Show from these examples how the Church is the protector of women. Explain *nullity* as it existed in the Marconi-O'Brien case; in the Marlborough-Vanderbilt case. Show that Rome's pronouncements of nullity have no connection with money payments. Give examples. Contrast the protected position of women under Christianity with the position of women under paganism. Explain how Mary, the ideal woman of all ages, is the capstone in the teaching of Christ on the elevation and spiritual enfranchisement of women, and the model for women of all ages.

#### Practices:

Use your influence whenever possible in behalf of the ideals of Christian marriage.

Explain to non-Catholics the influence of the Blessed Virgin in elevating human society from the depths of paganism.

Renew your devotion to the Mother of God, saying daily at least one decade of the Rosary.

## Chapter XXIV

### COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

#### *The Church's Guidance in the Quest for Happiness*

Why do common sense and reason so often play such inconspicuous roles in courtship in America? Why do so many young people view courtship in a spirit of levity and give such scant consideration to the factors essential for the stability of their union and for their lifelong happiness? Granting that the heart plays the chief role, must reason be entirely suppressed? Cannot love receive guidance and help from practical common sense?

These are questions which arise in the minds of pastors, parents and all our citizens interested in preserving the sanctity of the home, as they read each day the story of blighted romances, broken homes and families torn asunder. There is scarcely a block in our large cities that is without its fragments from the wreckage of a broken home. With the grim evidence of domestic tragedies on every side, is it not high time to call attention to the supreme importance of using reason and common sense in the selection of a partner for life?

Why are there so many separations and divorces? One of the chief causes is because the couple discovers after marriage that they are mismatched. When the dreamland of their honeymoon has yielded to the realities of a work-a-day world, they begin to perceive what a blind man could have pointed out to them before, that they have little in common. They are uncongenial in temperament and disposition, they differ in moral character and in religious outlook, they vary in culture and in tastes. The delicate bonds which spring from congeniality in these fields and remain intact, even after mere sentiment has largely shot its bolt, are lacking. Association first loses its charm, then its interest. Boredom sets in and finally yields to chafing and aversion. The divorce court has new grist for its mills.

#### *Things Which Count*

Why do not young people perceive these facts before it is too late? Why do so many of them make no honest effort to explore beforehand those important qualities of mind and character without which any union rests only on the quicksands of capricious sentiment? A young man seeks to court a girl because of the texture and color of her skin, the radiance of her eyes, the contour of her face, and other superficial items. But character, disposition, intelligence, understanding, sympathy and unselfishness are the things which count in making for the happiness of the home and the permanence of the union.

While beauty and good looks are not to be disparaged, the qualities of mind, heart and soul abovementioned are infinitely more valuable. The delicate coloring of the skin changes, the beauty of the complexion vanishes, but character remains. It grows in strength and beauty and unselfishness with the passing of the years. The man who seeks to build the citadel of his conjugal happiness upon such gossamer threads as complexion and appearance, with scant attention to moral character and disposition, often finds out later that he has neglected the important item of a solid foundation. True happiness is seldom found in a fool's paradise.

The Church urges young people to select their helpmates for life with due regard to the important requisites for a happy and enduring union. She warns them in advance that they will pay a heavy penalty for negligence, for impetuosity, for rashness in this matter. Before she admits candidates to the priesthood, she requires them to spend long years in training and discipline, meditating all the while on the seriousness of the step they contemplate. Yet Holy Orders imposes no obligation of greater duration than that imposed by matrimony. The consequences of both last until death. Why then should not candidates for matrimony bestow at least a small measure of the care and consideration demanded of those who aspire to the sacred ministry?

#### *A Momentous Decision*

The simple truth is that all the voices of earth and sky and heaven thunder in the ear of the young person contemplating marriage to make sure of the presence of those

qualities of mind and heart and soul which alone can guarantee lasting happiness for his union. While the heart may flutter with the wings of love, he should keep his feet on the solid ground of reality, listen to the voice of reason, and look carefully whither he is about to leap. In every domain of human life, the use of reason yields a rich premium, its neglect a heavy penalty. In no field, however, is the premium richer or the penalty heavier than in the choice of a partner for all the years of one's life.

Prudence suggests that before making so momentous a choice the advice of parents and of other sensible persons of experience should be sought. Before making an investment of consequence, a prudent person will secure the counsel of other parties, better informed and more experienced than himself. While such counsel is by no means infallible, it at least greatly lessens the hazards involved. When a person is about to invest his whole life with its hopes of enduring happiness, why should he not at least consult wise and judicious counsellors about the momentous choice he is contemplating?

The tendency of young people to confide in no one about their engagement, and to keep the whole affair a secret until after the marriage, closes the door to many helpful influences which would at least lessen the danger of an obviously unwise choice. No decision which a person is ever called upon to make involves consequences of a more far-reaching character than that entailed in the selection of a helpmate for life. Does it not follow, therefore, that here above all other places, a young person should exhaust all prudence and all the common sense he possesses to see that he does not make a fatal error?

#### *No Substitute for Common Sense*

Older persons will recall the words of a ditty, popular a generation ago, but voicing the question in the minds of many in this day as well:

"Will some one kindly tell me,  
Will some one let me know,  
How I picked a lemon in the garden of love  
Where I thought only peaches grow?"

If the person asking this question afterwards had only consulted sensible friends beforehand, he would have found

an abundant answer to the query he asks now—all too late. Life knows of no adequate substitute for prudence and practical common sense.

Some of my readers may feel inclined at this point to say: "Yes, what you say is true. Young people should use prudence and reason in choosing a life partner. But are you not insisting at needless length upon so obvious a truism?" The fact is, however, that this truth, so readily admitted in theory, is frequently ignored in practice. Thousands upon thousands of marriages occur each year and end shortly in the divorce courts. Why? Simply because young people insist upon throwing reason overboard, and refuse to consider the factors indispensable for a stable union and enduring happiness.

Why do so many lament afterwards: "If I had only stopped to think! If I had listened to my reason instead of hearkening only to the flutterings of my heart, I would have perceived how blind and how foolish I was! Oh, if I were only free to make the choice over again, I would not be such a fool."

What pastor has not heard the above refrain with too tragic a frequency? Indeed, it is not too much to say that if young people used prudence and common sense, consulted wise and judicious friends, explored the item of congeniality in matters other than sentiment, made sure of the character, disposition, reliability, religious outlook of the person involved, the vast majority of unfortunate marriages ending in disaster would have been avoided.

It is one thing to know a truth. It is a different thing to practice it. It is narrated that in his old age St. John preached with great frequency the simple truth, "My little children, love one another." When some of his hearers complained of the tiresome monotony of its continued repetition, the beloved disciple replied in effect: "Little else matters. For if you observe this precept, you will observe the others as well." If St. John were less charitable he could probably have replied: "I will continue to preach this truth until you begin to practice it." The Church never wearies of pointing out to her children the supreme importance of exercising the greatest care in the selection of a partner for life.



*Danger of Haste*

One of the dangers which the Church warns against is that of excessive haste. Her law requiring the proclamation of the banns on three Sundays preceding the wedding serves as a brake against too precipitate action. Judges who preside at divorce courts have repeatedly voiced the conviction that a large percentage of the cases appearing before them are traceable to excessive haste. A young man takes a sudden fancy to a girl. It is probably kindled by her complexion, her contour, or the radiance of her eyes. Infatuation, but not love, comes at first sight. A whirlwind courtship ends in a sudden elopement. They awake from the honeymoon to discover they are as different from one another as day is from night. The divorce court will not be idle long.

As a result of their observations, jurists have frequently sounded the tocsin against precipitate speed in rushing into marriage. They have urged the enactment of laws requiring individuals to register their intention to wed, and then to wait for a certain length of time before the marriage could occur. The idea is that in the required interval the ardor of many mismated couples would cool down, and allow them to see each other with the eyes of reason, and not merely through the rose-colored lens of inflamed emotions. The garish light of day reveals a multitude of imperfections, glaring and strident, but glossed over by the magic of the moonlight, calling forth dreams of high romance. In the effort to stem the flood of such ill-considered unions, some states have already enacted laws along the lines above suggested.

In a class in sociology at Columbia University the late Professor F. H. Giddings was recently pointing out the urgent need for some such brake upon the too precipitate speed of couples willing to act in haste, only to repent at leisure. Whereupon a Catholic student explained the Church's law in regard to the proclamation of the banns. The explanation evoked from Professor Giddings the following interesting observation: "Aside entirely from its religious implications, I want to commend highly the social utility of such a law. As a professor of sociology, I am convinced that if such a law were enacted in every state in the Union, it would enable a vast number of mismated couples to discover

their uncongeniality before they rushed headlong into the marital contract only to clutter up the docket of the divorce court later on." This law of the Church is therefore a safeguard for marriage, not only in its sacramental character, but also as an institution that plays a vital role in the welfare of human society.

*Excessive Length*

While the Church warns against courtships of undue brevity, she likewise counsels against those of excessive length. No hard and fast rule can be laid down determining the exact length of courtship. In general it should be of sufficient duration to allow young people to know the character and disposition of each other quite well. This can usually be done in a period ranging from six months to a year. Being a period of stress and strain in many respects, courtship should not be unduly protracted. Persons who keep company for many years are without the sustaining influence of the sacrament of matrimony, and are exposed to much danger. A courtship too long drawn out wears away the glamour and leads many a promising romance to the rocks.

The function of courtship is to enable young people to know one another sufficiently well to embark together on life's voyage. But where no such end is anticipated, courtship has little or no meaning. Courtship may be compared to a porch, over which people walk to reach the door of the home. What would one think of people who entered upon the porch and proceeded to remain there indefinitely, just as though they were unaware that it was not intended as the terminal, but merely as the entrance to the home proper? Similar is the state of those who, having entered upon courtship, forget that it is not the end but merely the means to the end, merely the vestibule leading to the great sacrament.

The following incident is related of the famous American humorist, Bill Nye. As a young man he called one Sunday afternoon upon his lady friend to take her for a buggy ride. He waited in the parlor for what seemed to him a young eternity—probably a matter of an hour. At last the young lady appeared, groomed with meticulous nicety. She had just opened the door, preparatory to descending to the waiting surrey, when her eyes fell upon the lean and patient

horse. "What!" she exclaimed indignantly, "do you expect me to ride behind such a skinny nag?" "But, my dear," replied Bill Nye, "when I first arrived here this afternoon that was a fat horse."

### *Is It Fair?*

Young men at times draw out courtship to such unending length, that the lady would be justified in paralleling the reflection of the American humorist by saying: "When you first began to keep company with me, I was a young girl. Now I am almost a middle-aged woman." The simple fact is that a grievous injustice can be done to the girl by monopolizing her attention for several years, depriving her of many other opportunities, and then when her youthful charm has waned, walking out. It is neither chivalrous nor honorable. Neither is it fair nor just. When courtship is being protracted to unseemly length, the father of the girl should inquire of the young man what his intentions are—and incidentally what is the reason for the long delay.

In America we carry to extremes the idea that marriage is an affair that concerns only the two individuals involved. If parents are genuinely interested in the happiness of their daughter, why should they not manifest that solicitude in the honest and effective manner just mentioned? In the countries of Europe the parents take a much more active part in assisting their children in the forming of suitable unions. They view the matter with less sentiment, perhaps, but with much more practical common sense. The time has come in America, with its divorce rate mounting higher than any country in the civilized world except Japan, when parents and pastors must take an increasing interest in assisting young people in the successful solution of the most crucial problem life presents to them—the choice of a helpmate for life.

In common with all mankind, young people are engaged in the endless quest for happiness. But happiness is not a private or a solitary affair. Suppose that we say to an individual: "Here is a thousand dollars. Go and buy happiness for yourself alone. You must not seek it, however, in the friendship and love of other people." We would be assigning to him an end, but would be forbidding him the only effective means of achieving it. Why? Because happiness is a social

affair. It is found in the esteem and friendship and love of others. Like the moon which shines by reflected light, happiness is found in the reflection of the sympathy, trust and affection of others. Wealth, knowledge and fame are no adequate substitutes for the latter, and hence cannot bring true happiness.

### *The Light of Love*

Among the worst miseries of life is that of unrelieved loneliness. To go to one's dwelling at evening, only to find it empty of any person interested in your struggles, rejoicing in your achievements, softening the sting of defeat with the balm of sympathy and understanding, is to live in a darkened chamber whither the sunshine of human comradeship and love scarcely penetrates. As other forms of life, when deprived of the sun's rays, wither and die, so human life, robbed of the sunshine of love and sympathy, loses its zest, its enthusiasm and its vigor. Love is the radiance which brightens the world of human life with the sunshine of happiness. Francis William Bourdillon expressed a profound truth when he wrote in lines of simple beauty:

"The night has a thousand eyes,  
And the day but one;  
Yet the light of the bright world dies  
With the dying sun.

"The mind has a thousand eyes,  
And the heart but one;  
Yet the light of a whole life dies  
When love is done."

Not long ago a young man, receiving instruction in the Catholic faith, said to the writer: "Father, when the clock in our bank registered four o'clock, I was always at my wit's end to devise ways of passing the two hours till dinner time. After I married and God blessed us with a little babe, I could scarcely wait for the clock to reach four, so anxious was I to get home to be with my wife and child. The Church's emphasis upon the finding of happiness at the fireside of the home is well placed. I had sought happiness before," he continued, "in the forms of entertainment which engage the attention of single men, but now after I have tasted the great joys of conjugal love and fatherhood, I can truthfully say that I am

just beginning to live. Until a man has partaken of these two great experiences, he doesn't know the meaning or purpose of human life." In these words every pastor of souls will perceive the refrain whispered in his ear times without number by young men and women who have hearkened to that divine voice calling them to life's great adventure.

#### *A Divine Plan*

Love, courtship and marriage are so often treated in a spirit of levity, and are made the butt of so many jokes, that it is worth while to point out that they are part of a divine plan. This is made clear to us by the scene that is disclosed at the very dawn of human existence. After Almighty God had created the universe and all living things thereon, He placed man, the crowning glory of His creative power, in the Garden of Paradise, and gave to him dominion over all living creatures.

Sovereign of Paradise that he was, richer than any mortal man in material wealth and in the chaste beauty of nature's virgin landscape, there still remained, in spite of it all, a void and an emptiness that rested like a sombre pall upon his lonely heart. Then out of the heavens the voice of Almighty God is heard: "It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself."<sup>1</sup>

When Adam gazes upon the face of Eve, his eyes behold a new beauty and a loveliness which nothing in all the vast pageantry of nature can duplicate or rival. The emptiness in his heart vanishes. In its place he feels a new and a strange emotion never felt before. The prosaic coloring of the flowers is suddenly transformed into a gorgeous pageant of poetic beauty; the meaningless chirping of the birds is transmuted into a symphony of moving melody. Life takes on a new meaning, a fresh significance. He sees now for the first time the beauty and the poetry and the romance of human existence.

Moved by a divine impulse, he plights his deathless troth to Eve. There under the white canopied stole of the virginal sky, in the morning of life, in the presence of the priesthood of nature, Adam seals his vow with the first kiss of love. With prophetic vision into the unwritten future, God

<sup>1</sup>Gen. II, 18.

proclaims the law for all mankind: "Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh." It is the great mystery of human love which makes two hearts beat as one. It is a sacred flame. For it is kindled by a spark from the eternal and uncreated love of God.

#### *A Safeguard*

"It is not good for man to be alone." How often the words of Almighty God, uttered at the dawn of the race's history, come back to the priest, as he sits for long hours in the tribunal of confession, listening to the sins of men and women journeying alone over life's highway. How vividly he comes to realize the meaning of that divine admonition. No one can realize more clearly than the priest of God, to whom are unbosomed the secrets of hearts, the dangers, pitfalls, and tragedies that beset the path of the lonely traveler.

God created a helpmate like unto himself to be a companion for man, a promoter of his happiness and a protector of his virtue. The sacrament of matrimony is, therefore, a great source of mutual consolation, as it is a great safeguard for the virtue of both men and women. That is why the confessor will often have occasion to point to the sacrament of matrimony as an invaluable spiritual prophylactic and an important aid in the attainment of one's eternal salvation.

Aside entirely, however, from its spiritual succor, matrimony is among the most potent influences in the development of the human personality to its manifold perfections and in the promotion of human happiness. As the bud on the rose bush reaches its full epiphany only by opening its petals, shedding its perfumed fragrance on the passing zephyrs, and dying to itself in the full blown blush of its mature beauty, so human character is spiritualized and rendered beautiful and unselfish by losing itself in ministering to others.

#### *Two Diverse Natures*

Fashioned by the Almighty hand as the complement to man's incomplete nature, woman has been endowed by God with that divine forgetfulness of self that finds its happiness in ministering to the happiness of man. She increases the joy of victory and softens the sting of defeat. She is his inspiration in success and his comfortress in the dark hours of ad-



versity. From the time that Eve came to dispel the void and loneliness in the heart of Adam, to the time that Mary stood weeping at the foot of the Cross, when the Apostles themselves had fled, down to the present hour when womanhood embodies in richer measure the virtues of chastity and unselfishness, woman has been the crowning glory of God's creative power.

Out of the union of these diverse natures, man with his aggressive strength, woman with her tender sympathy, is born in the sacrament of matrimony the Christian home. It is the cornerstone of human society, a sanctuary of conjugal fidelity, before whose tabernacle there burns the vigil light of a deathless love. How carefully the Church rears about that sanctuary its loftiest fortifications and guards it against the invasion of a profane intruder. How the happiest and the holiest of our memories cluster about the fireside of the home.

#### *A Million Dollars?*

If some wealthy philanthropist were to promise to bestow upon a young man, upon reaching maturity, the gift of a million dollars, how delighted he would be! Yet Providence stands ready to confer upon every young man on reaching maturity an even greater gift. The reader may feel inclined to say: "Surely, that is an exaggeration, a figure of speech." Let us see. When Joseph Grogan had been working for three years after graduation from college, in spite of his boon companions, his parties and dances, he began to feel the shallowness and emptiness of it all.

It was an echo of that primeval hunger that gnawed at the bosom of his first father, Adam, alone in the Garden of Eden, and that still reverberates in the breasts of all his progeny. He felt the need of an incentive to urge him on to greater success, some one to inspire him toward a loftier ideal. One day he revealed his discontent to the priest in confession. His confessor pointed to the sacrament of matrimony as the agency divinely established to fill that void in the hearts of men. He saw the sacrament now in a new light.

In this serious quest, he passed over the social butterflies with their painted faces, tempting dress, and languishing eyes. "They're all right," Joe said, "to while away an idle hour with, but they're giddy and empty." They begin to pall

after a while because they do not stir the deeper spiritual elements in man's nature. They kindle no noble thoughts nor holy resolves to fire the soul of man to higher things. For it is the subtle after-echo that tells the true value of companionship. For a helpmate through life he wanted not mere gossamer, capricious as the changing winds. He wanted something more substantial to weather, not merely the gentle zephyrs of spring, but the storms of life's winter as well.

At last Joe found her, a lovely Catholic girl, unselfish in disposition, with a moral character that caused him to think only noble thoughts and breathe holy resolves. When the priest joined them in the deathless union of the sacrament at a nuptial Mass, Joe and Mary tasted the sweetest happiness that God grants to man in this vale of tears. Then God blessed their union with that most wonderful of all his gifts, a little angel in human flesh. Joe understood now the romance and the mystery of life. That little babe bound those hearts still more closely together in a blessed trinity of love. Mary was not only his wife now, but the mother of his child as well. He loved her with a love as strong as life itself. In that sanctuary of the home, a tabernacle of holy love, Joe came as near to that celestial paradise as earth can ever go.

#### *God's Perfect Gift*

Then out of a clear sky, the sombre pall of a critical illness falls upon Mary. For days she hovers between life and death. Dazed, Joe watches at her bedside, night and day, praying with a fervor never known before. A tear steals into his eye as with broken voice he prays: "Spare her, O God, and do anything Thou wilt with me instead." Go to Joe as he stands there and ask him what he would take to part with the gift God had given to him upon receiving the sacrament of matrimony.

Would Joe part with her for a million dollars, aye, for the Presidency of the United States? Not for all the gold in Solomon's mines, not for the Presidency of the United States, not for the glitter of kingly thrones, would Joe part with her, who was all that life meant to him. All these things were but as dross without the love which gave to life its meaning. God hearkened to his prayer, and in granting it, he gave Joe the most precious thing in human life.

That is the gift which Almighty God stands ready to bestow upon every young man who proves himself worthy of the great sacrament of matrimony—the love of a good and virtuous girl. For the flame of love that burns in the bosom of sweethearts is kindled by no human hand, but by a spark from the love that is eternal and divine. That is the gift which transformed the ennui of Eden into a garden of happiness for Adam, and which still transmutes for all his progeny the toil of life into a labor of love. It is God's perfect gift to man. When will young men come to learn that happiness is to be found not amid the crash of a jazz orchestra but at the fireside of the home?

The sophistication of the twentieth century has not rendered superfluous or out-of-date the warning of the Most High, uttered at the dawn of human history: "It is not good for man to be alone." That warning is of perennial timeliness to every generation of men, for it is based upon the unchanging hunger and the ceaseless questing of the human heart for love and happiness.

### Discussion Aids

Why is common sense so important a factor in choosing a life partner? What is to be said in comparing the preparation for Holy Orders and for Matrimony? Should advice of parents and other advisers be sought by those preparing for marriage? Discuss the value of prudence of choice as a preventive of divorce. What danger is averted by the publication of banns? What is to be said of unduly long courtships? With what danger and injustice are they beset? Discuss love, courtship and marriage in the light of the divine plan. Discuss marriage as a mutual consolation, safeguard, and development of personality. Sum up the case for the use of prudence and common sense in courtship.

### Practices:

Make courtship a prayerful affair, commending yourselves to the special protection of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph.

Talk freely and seriously with parents or other capable advisers early in your friendship with the opposite sex.

Have a picture of the Holy Family in your home.

## Chapter XXV

### MARRIAGE: WHY INDISSOLUBLE?

#### *The Church Defends the Sanctity of the Family Fireside*

"Why does the Catholic Church forbid divorce?" is a question frequently asked by our dear non-Catholic fellow citizens. Witnessing the spectacle of one out of every six marriages contracted in the United States ending in the divorce courts, our separated brethren often wonder why the Church has never wavered in her historic stand against divorce. Their wonderment increases when they behold their own ministers officiating at the marriages of persons who have been married two and three times previously.

In order to present the fundamental grounds for the Church's unswerving opposition to divorce it is necessary first of all to point out that the Church regards the union of two Christians, that is two baptized people, as constituting not only a civil contract but also a sacrament instituted by Christ. This conception immediately removes the marriage of Christians from the exclusive jurisdiction of the civil authority and places it, at least in its religious aspect, under that of Christ and of His Church. It belongs, therefore, to the religious authority to declare the conditions under which a sacrament may be validly received.

#### *Matrimony—A Sacrament*

One word then about the sacramental character of matrimony. In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul refers to marriage as "a great sacrament," declaring that he speaks "in Christ and in the Church."<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, writing in the fourth century, reflects the universal belief of the infant Church, in his insistence upon its sacramental character. "It is certain," he writes, "that not fecundity only, the fruit of which consists of offspring, nor chastity only, whose bond is fidelity, but also that a Sacrament is recommended to be-

<sup>1</sup>Ephesians v: 25-32.

lievers in wedlock when the Apostle says, 'Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church.' Of this Sacrament the substance undoubtedly is that the man and the woman who are joined together in wedlock, should remain inseparable as long as they live."<sup>1</sup>

Further confirmation of the universal belief of the Christian Church up to the time of the Reformation in the sacramental character of matrimony is found in the creed of the churches of the East, such as those of the Nestorians, Monophysites, Copts and Jacobites. Although separated from the Mother Church since the first five centuries, the rituals of these churches bear witness to their inclusion of matrimony among the seven sacraments. When the professors of Tübingen University in the sixteenth century sought to win the Greek Church to the creed of the reformers, the Greek patriarch, Jeremias, indignantly scouted their suggestion that his church could ever be won to their doctrine of but two sacraments. Testifying to the unvarying belief of the Oriental Church in the seven sacraments, including matrimony, he terminated their overtures with a scornful refusal. Thus eloquently do the voices of Christian tradition testify to the sacramental character of matrimony. Like all the other sacraments, it too was instituted by Christ.

Let us now proceed to answer the question: Why does the Church forbid divorce? The answer is simple. *Because Christ forbade it.* As the institution founded by our divine Saviour and commanded to teach His doctrines, the Church could sanction divorce only by being faithless to the command of Christ. To distinguish divorce from mere legal separation, we shall use the term in this discussion in the sense in which it is commonly understood by our non-Catholic friends, as a severance of the marriage bond with the consequent freedom of marrying again.

#### *Teaching of Christ*

That our Lord forbade divorce is explicitly recorded by three Evangelists and is corroborated by St. Paul. When the Pharisees asked Christ: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" He answered them: "Have you not read, that He who made man from the beginning,

made them male and female? For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." When they persisted: "Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce, and to put away?" Christ replied: "Because Moses by reason of the hardness of your heart permitted you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery."<sup>1</sup>

#### *No Exception*

The inference has been drawn by some of our dear non-Catholic friends that when a wife has been guilty of adultery, her husband may not only put her away but may marry another. Such an inference, however, is unfounded. For Christ declares without any limitation: "He that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery." This can be true only on the supposition that the previous marriage remained intact, even though the husband has separated from his wife because of her infidelity. Hence, the meaning of Christ's answer to the Pharisees is: In case of infidelity to her marriage vows, a husband may separate from his wife, but if he contracts a new marriage he himself becomes an adulterer.

That such is the correct interpretation of our Saviour's teaching is confirmed by St. Mark and St. Luke. St. Mark records it thus: "When his disciples asked him concerning the same thing, He said to them: Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."<sup>2</sup> The statement of St. Luke is similarly comprehensive. Addressing the Pharisees, Christ said: "Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery."<sup>3</sup>

From all these texts which refer directly to the remarriage of separated parties, it is evident that Christ makes no

<sup>1</sup>Matt. xix, 4-9.

<sup>2</sup>Mark x, 10-12.

<sup>3</sup>Luke xvi, 18.

<sup>1</sup>De Nupt. et Concup., I, 10.



exception whatsoever. In the clearest and most absolute terms He declares that though separation is allowed for the grave reason mentioned, remarriage during the lifetime of the other party is never permitted, but constitutes the sin of adultery. When Christ made the solemn and impressive proclamation, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," He made the marriage bond indissoluble henceforth by any human power.

*"Not I, But the Lord"*

To this teaching of Christ concerning the indissolubility of the matrimonial bond, St. Paul bears witness. Writing to the Corinthians, he admonishes them that this doctrine is not of his invention but is the teaching of Christ Himself. "To them that are married," he writes, "*not I but the Lord commandeth*, that the wife depart not from her husband. And if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband."<sup>1</sup>

These words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles should be placed conspicuously before the eyes of the American people today. For it must be admitted that great numbers of people, even many calling themselves Christians, no longer regard marriage as indissoluble save by death. They look upon it in much the same light as any other civil contract which is voidable at the option of the contracting parties. While it is easy to understand how such a view could be held by non-Christians, it is difficult to understand how those who profess to adhere to the teachings of Christ can at the same time hold a view explicitly condemned by the Founder of the Christian religion.

Do they not need to have repeated to them today the warning words which St. Paul addressed to the Christian colony at Corinth nineteen centuries ago, "*Not I but the Lord commandeth*"? The doctrine of the absolute indissolubility of the bond of Christian marriage is not the invention of the Apostles, of the councils or pontiffs of the Church, or of any man, but the plain unmistakable teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. Because the Catholic Church believes in Christ and seeks to honor and reverence Him, she holds today, as she has

<sup>1</sup>I Cor. vii, 10, 11.

held throughout the centuries, to His teaching concerning the sanctity and the permanence of Christian marriage. To do otherwise would be to commit treason against her divine Founder.

*Purpose of Law*

What about the social benefits and the relief from domestic unhappiness alleged to result from divorce? To persons who believe in the divinity of the Founder of the Christian faith, it must be apparent that no teaching of Christ could be detrimental to the welfare of society or to the enduring happiness of mankind. Like all the other laws of Christ, this one concerning the sanctity and the indissolubility of marriage has for its end the welfare of human society as a whole.

There are probably few, if any, laws ever framed, no matter how wholesome and necessary for the general welfare, which have not pinched an individual here and there. It need not be denied that particular cases can be cited where the innocent party in a marriage that turns out badly is called upon to make a great and even a heroic sacrifice. Let it even be admitted that a complete severance of the marriage bond with the consequent privilege of remarrying would be conducive to the happiness of an individual who is the innocent victim of such a marriage. Does this admission justify divorce? Not at all.

In her solicitude for the happiness of all her children, the Church permits complete separation where circumstances require it. But if an exception were once allowed to Christ's law against divorce, it would be but a short time before the law would be so riddled by exceptions as seriously to cripple the law and thus to impair the attainment of its purpose, the welfare of society as a whole. This is particularly true of a law which seeks to guide into beneficent social channels the tumultuous passions of human nature.

*Fatal Entering Wedge*

If any one doubts the truth of the above observation let him look at the experience of our Protestant brethren. Within the Christian fold, divorce was practically unknown until the Protestant Reformation. Substituting their own opinions

for the clear teaching of Christ as transmitted by the three Evangelists, by St. Paul and by the unbroken tradition of fifteen centuries, the founders of the principal Protestant denominations began by permitting divorce on the sole ground of adultery. It was the fatal entering wedge that was destined to pry apart millions of unions which Christ had forbade any man to put asunder. Under the pressure of man's unbridled lust, the grounds for divorce began to be multiplied, until today they are so numerous as to permit people to sever the sacred tie for the slightest and silliest reasons.

Thus on the very day on which I write these lines, the newspapers of the country carry a story sent out by the Associated Press to this effect: In a city in California a woman has filed suit for divorce because her husband "diagrammed the wing formations of the football team he is coaching, on the fluffy biscuits I made for his breakfast." This, she alleged, constituted "mental cruelty." Hence, her petition for divorce. If the court follows the precedent in many states of granting divorces for the flimsiest and silliest reasons, the sensitive spouse will have received her divorce before these lines reach the printer's ink. To such a degradation has sunk the sanctity of the most sacred vows ever plighted by husband and wife—the vows of deathless love and loyalty.

Ministers in most of the Protestant denominations now unite persons, divorced three, four, or more times, in new marriages with no apparent recollection of the stern warning of the divine Founder of Christianity: "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Thus is the teaching of Christ concerning the holiness and the permanence of marriage torn into shreds and tatters. The thousand grounds on which divorce is granted have practically annihilated in the churches of our separated brethren the law of Christ concerning the sanctity and the indissolubility of the marriage bond.

#### *Mistake of Reformers*

The experience of the Protestant churches in the matter offers, therefore, abundant testimony to the folly of making exceptions to the universal validity of the laws of Christ—especially when they are seeking to hold in leash the

passions of men. Inserting the opening wedge of a single exception to Christ's law on marriage is like inserting a slender blade through the dykes restraining the sea from flooding the lowlands of Holland. Under the battering of the tumultuous seas, that slight crevice will expand until soon there will be pouring through the opening a roaring avalanche of ocean that will flood the land and spread death and destruction in its wake. The Church stands as a sentinel upon the dyke of the sacrament of matrimony, instituted by Christ to promote the happiness and welfare of the race, and to hold in check the passions which, if unleashed, would spread ruin and disaster everywhere.

In this connection it should be pointed out that Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation, did most to destroy the Christian faith of the people in the unity and the permanence of marriage. He began by declaring that "marriage is a mere worldly thing." He then encouraged divorces by announcing from his pulpit that after the example of the Assyrian king, every husband who was not satisfied with his spouse could substitute Esther for Vashti, and put the servant in place of the mistress.<sup>1</sup> Going even further, he sanctioned a plurality of wives. In a letter to the Chancellor of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, he wrote: "The Scriptures prevent me from forbidding any one to take several wives at the same time. It is a commendable practice but I would not be the first to introduce it among Christians."

Nor did he permit his teaching to remain mere theory. He reduced it to practice. Together with his fellow reformers, Melancthon, Bucer, Lensing, Corvinus and Wintfert, he authorized Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse, to take a second wife when he was still living with the first by whom he had already eight children and from whom he had no intention of separating. Here one sees at work, at the very birth of Protestantism, those forces which have been ceaselessly operative within her numerous divisions, and which under the stress of human passions have so twisted and distorted the great ideal proclaimed by Christ—the union of husband and wife in a marriage indissoluble by any human power.

<sup>1</sup>Sermon on Marriage, Wittenberg, 1522.

*A Candid Avowal*

That the practice of tearing Christian homes asunder through the institution of divorce is directly traceable to the teachings and the example of the reformers is now frankly acknowledged by our separated brethren. Thus the Protestant Bishop of Maine some years ago made the following candid avowal: "Laxity of opinion and teaching on the sacredness of the marriage bond and on the question of divorce originated among the Protestants of Continental Europe in the sixteenth century. It soon began to appear in the legislation of Protestant States on that continent, and nearly at the same time to affect the laws of New England. From that time to the present it has proceeded from one degree to another in this country, until especially in New England and in states most directly affected by New England opinions and usages, the Christian conception of the nature and obligations of the marriage bond finds scarcely any recognition in legislation or in the prevailing sentiment of the community."<sup>1</sup>

It should be added, however, that the example has been quickly followed by the Western states. Today the divorce courts of Reno, Nevada, have achieved notoriety throughout the nation for the speed and facility with which they tear asunder for trivial reasons the sacred bond of Christian marriage.

*Growth of Divorce*

Let us now glance at the havoc wrought in the domestic life of modern society by the wedge action of divorce. Three examples will suffice. In France divorce, which was a comparatively recent innovation, in 1910 disrupted over 7000 homes. By 1913 the number had mounted to more than 15,000—an increase of more than 100%. The number is still increasing. In Germany in 1900 there were 81 divorces for each 100,000 existing marriages. But by 1914 this number had climbed to 143 for each 100,000 marriages—an increase of over 75%.

In our country the rate of increase is even more alarming. From 1870 to 1900 the number of divorces per 100,000 married population jumped from 81 to 200—an increase of

<sup>1</sup>The Calling of a Christian Woman, by Rev. Morgan Dix.

approximately 150%. Thirty-five years ago about one out of every twelve marriages celebrated in the United States terminated in divorce. Today about one in every six comes to a similar tragic end. Into the very marrow of modern civilization the wedge is penetrating deeper and deeper.

Entirely aside from religious considerations, many careful observers of the growing laxity in regard to the marriage vows are pointing to the unhappy consequences for the individual and for society. Thus H. L. Mencken condemns the agitation for companionate marriage, not on grounds of religion or morality, but because it violates the elementary principles of human psychology. "The trouble with the companionate marriage scheme," he writes, "is that it destroys security and trust. Neither party can ever be quite sure of the other, and hence neither can give the other full confidence. A normal man does not marry a woman thinking of her as a possible enemy; he marries her thinking of her as a perpetual friend. If there be any chance of happiness in the companionate scheme, then all that has been taught about human psychology is false."

In a recent address at the University of Illinois, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise declared anent the movement to change the laws of marriage to make divorce easier: "What is needed is not a change in the laws of marriage, as reformers are fond of picturing, but a change in the heart and in the morals of the individual who is unwilling to remain true to his conjugal vows, but who is willing to enthrone lust in their place."

*Public Welfare—First*

Every nation or society that wishes to survive must develop in its individual members a sense of social solidarity, and a willingness to sacrifice private interests for the public weal. In time of war the citizen is called upon to defend his country even at the risk of his life. The measure in which an individual is willing to subordinate his own selfish interests for the welfare of his family, his state, his nation, or humanity in general, is largely the measure of his unselfishness and nobility of character.

When a marriage turns out badly, and the innocent victim feels tempted to have recourse to divorce and remar-



riage, Christ calls upon such a one to be willing to sacrifice his own selfish interests for the larger welfare of society as a whole. The divine Master would have him remember that if an exception were made in his case, there could be no drawing of the line, and that in consequence the unity and permanence of marriage would in a large measure be destroyed. An individual should recognize that in such circumstances he is called upon to play the role of a self-sacrificing hero and to place the public weal above his private interests. Such a one is no less worthy of the gratitude of his fellow countrymen than is the soldier who defends his country from the attack of the enemy. Nor less worthy of the reward of Almighty God.

Did not Christ and His Blessed Mother set us the example of conforming to the law, even though in their cases there was no real need for the performance of the required actions? Did not Christ as a little babe undergo the rite of circumcision as demanded by the Mosaic law, even though there was no real need for such purification in His case? Did not Mary present herself at the Temple forty days after the birth of Jesus and submit to the rite of purification as required by the Judaic law, even though her virginity was not impaired by motherhood? Thus did Christ and his blessed Mother set an example to the Christians of all ages by obeying a law instead of claiming, as well they might, that exception be made in their cases.

#### *An Illustration*

As this point is crucial, and, in the writer's judgment, is the only logical grounds on which one can appeal to the innocent victim of an unfortunate marriage to conform to a law for the common weal, even though it pinches him individually, let us present one final illustration. The law of the secrecy of the confessional forbids the confessor to divulge any sin, even the slightest, mentioned by the penitent in confession. Yet individual instances can be cited where the revelation of such information would seem to be warranted because of unusual circumstances.

Take the case of a prisoner charged with a serious crime. A priest through his office of confessor knows that another individual has accused himself of that very crime.

Might he not say to himself: "By divulging a secret of the confessional to the civil authorities I can free a man unjustly accused of a serious crime, and bring to punishment the real culprit. By so doing I would promote the cause of justice. Therefore in these unusual circumstances the law of the secrecy of the confessional does not bind me." No, indeed. He would be utterly wrong in so concluding.

While it can be frankly admitted that, in that particular case, justice would be promoted and a single individual would be better off, yet the harm that would be done by undermining the confidence of people in the inviolable seal of the confessional would affect millions. It would in the long run wreak such damage to the public weal and the welfare of humanity in general as to outweigh a million times the benefit accruing to a solitary individual by making his case an exception to the law. The case is precisely the same in regard to marriage. If the sworn vows of deathless fidelity pledged by bride and groom are to instill abiding trust, their efficacy must not be crippled by the constituting of exceptions which would undermine the confidence of mankind in their universal validity and as a consequence in the sacredness and permanence of the marriage bond itself.

#### *A Fair Conclusion*

In the light of the abovementioned facts, the following conclusions seem fully warranted: In the Church's unswerving stand for the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage, our American democracy has its strongest bulwark and support. By preserving the home intact, the Church is not only safeguarding the foundations of orderly government but she is also promoting the highest type of family life. She is protecting the interests of husband, wife and children—and their happiness as well. In teaching her children to subordinate their private interests to the public weal, she is rendering an invaluable contribution to the development of the noblest type of American citizenship. Her uncompromising stand in defense of the permanent unity of the family fireside merits the praise of all our citizens who place the welfare of their country and of society as a whole above the satisfaction of their private whims. In the ears of those who would ask the Church to lower her lofty standards in

regard to Christian marriage, and would riddle her law of indissolubility with multitudinous exceptions, she would whisper again the words of the great Apostle, St. Paul: "Not I but the Lord commandeth."

### Discussion Aids

What authority has the Church to legislate for her members in regard to marriage? How do you know that marriage is a sacrament? Why does the Church forbid divorce? From what scriptural texts do we know that Christ forbade divorce? What was St. Paul's teaching to the Corinthians on the indissolubility of marriage? What relief does the Church grant in individual cases of extreme hardship in marriage? Is separation with remarriage ever permitted? What errors in regard to matrimony were made by the Reformers? What have been the results? Cite some statistics on the increase of divorce. What is to be said of subordinating our selfish interests, even in an unfortunate marriage, to the public welfare? Sum up the case for the indissolubility of marriage.

### Practices:

Help in organizing discussion clubs for young people on the subject of marriage.

Seek opportunities of placing in the hands of people entering upon marriage pamphlets or books of instruction on matrimony.

Before marriage, or during marriage, pray daily for the success of this "great sacrament" in your case.

## Chapter XXVI

### MARRIAGE: CATHOLIC OR MIXED?

#### *A Sore Spot in Protestant and Catholic Relations Frankly Discussed*

"Why does the Catholic Church forbid her members to marry persons outside of her fold? In our country where religious tolerance is so necessary and should be encouraged in every way possible, the ruling of your Church on this subject is narrow-minded and apt to breed intolerance. It builds up needless barriers between our citizens. It isolates them into clannish groups, and prevents their free assimilation into a unified citizenry, so essential for the well-being of a country such as ours, which is composed of people of every race and of every faith."

Such was the view recently expressed to the writer by a non-Catholic friend. His words reflect a sentiment common among our separated brethren. In proceeding to answer the criticism, let us first assure our dear non-Catholic readers that we agree heartily with them upon the necessity not merely of tolerance, but even of friendliness and goodwill, throughout the whole vast domain of our common civic relationships. To discriminate against a person in business or politics simply because of a difference in religion or in race is indeed un-American. We Catholics, who have been among the chief victims of such discrimination, will be the last people in the world to defend bigotry in any of its forms. Whether those forms be racial or religious they are all alike—ugly, un-American—and merit our unqualified condemnation.

#### *Pushed Too Far*

The idea of tolerance, however, can be pushed too far. It can be intruded into domains where it has no relevance. Thus to the query, "What is the sum of two and three?" no one would expect the teacher to smile as benignly and as

friendly upon the response, "ninety-seven," as upon the answer, "five." Why? Because truth has rights which error does not possess. Tolerance does not mean that people cannot hold certain principles to be true and others to be false without being guilty of narrow-mindedness.

Thus Catholics believe that the doctrines taught by Christ and promulgated by the Church which He founded are correct. They believe that all doctrines which contradict anything in the deposit of divine revelation are wrong. But they do not carry their disagreements on matters of religious belief into the altogether disparate field of business or politics, and discriminate in these fields against those with whom they differ on religious grounds. To do so would be intolerance, bigotry and fanaticism. It would go counter to the whole spirit of the Catholic Church and of everything for which she stands.

#### *Why Church Opposes*

Having thus cleared the way, we can come to grips with the real problem. Why does the Church oppose mixed marriages? She does so, not because she is lacking in high esteem for non-Catholics; not because she is indifferent to their happiness. It is precisely because she loves non-Catholics, children of the same Heavenly Father as we, and because she is solicitous for their happiness and welfare as she is for that of her own children, that she bids them to marry those of their own faith and bids Catholics to do likewise. From long experience she knows that marriages between persons sincerely attached to different religious faiths contain elements of danger to the happiness of both parties and to the stability of their union.

The Church does not speak in this matter from the experience of but one generation or of one country, but from many centuries of experience in all the countries of the world. Reason and common sense testify that where there is a difference on one of the most important matters in life, there is a subtle line of cleavage which should not be present in a union that is meant to be the most intimate that human beings can ever contract on this earth—a union of heart, mind and soul, a union of aspirations and of prayer.

Then, too, it must be remembered that the Church,

mindful of the obligation imposed on her by her divine Founder, of safeguarding the faith of her children and of her children's children, is deeply concerned over their entering for life into an atmosphere likely to damage or at least to chill their faith. It is because such marriages frequently lead to religious indifference on the part of the parents and to the neglect of the religious uprearing of the offspring that the Church forbids them. In her eyes the greatest treasure in life is the deposit of religious truth given to mankind by Jesus Christ. It is the pearl of great price. She would rather suffer death a thousand times than to deny that faith or to betray her trust. No consideration of wealth or social preferment or political influence could ever recompense for the loss of faith in even one of her children.

#### *A True Mother*

With this profound faith in the supreme value of the religion of Jesus Christ, and with a keen consciousness of her divinely appointed duty of safeguarding that deposit of truth in all its integrity for all generations of men, is it not natural that she would warn against any and every danger threatening the faith of her children? She would not be a faithful mother if she did not exhaust every ingenuity to remove any condition menacing her children's birthright. Must not our fair-minded citizens of other faiths be prompted to sentiments of admiration for the Church's ceaseless policy of protecting her children from serious dangers to their faith—a policy which is alone consistent with her belief in its supreme value?

"But if the Catholic religion is the true religion, as a Catholic believes it is, then why should there be any danger of his losing his faith from association in marriage with a non-Catholic? Does this not imply a lack of conviction in the intrinsic strength of the credentials of the Catholic faith? It shows that the Catholic religion needs a hothouse atmosphere, from which blasts from the outside are carefully excluded, to preserve it intact." Such is the objection which some of our non-Catholic readers may feel inclined at this point to interject.

The objection overlooks the fact, however, that men and women are not mere machines for logical reasoning, but are



flesh and blood, influenced by emotions and feelings as much perhaps as by intellectual considerations. Take a young man, for example, who has the conviction that the moral law should be obeyed. It is a conviction well grounded in reason. Place him in an environment where temptation assails him from every side. Vice clothed in the beguiling garb of beauty intrigues his imagination, stirs his emotions, inflames his passions. He is like a reed shaken by the wind. No person of experience will question the powerful influence of daily environment upon any human being. It is because the Church recognizes this fact that she strives to safeguard her children from life-long residence in surroundings ungenial to their religious faith.

Then, too, because of the lack of religious instruction in school and in the home, many of her children are not properly grounded in their faith. In consequence, unfavorable criticism, ridicule, social pressure, political discrimination and many other extraneous considerations prompt them to sell their birth-right for a mess of pottage.

#### *Effect on Children*

The influence of the home environment is probably most marked in the case of the children. With the spectacle of a division in religious creed among their own parents, it is indeed difficult to develop a strong, robust faith in the offspring. How natural it is for the child who has grown up in such a divided home to say: "If my own parents cannot agree as to which is the true religion, how can I?" Even when the non-Catholic father goes to no church and honestly tries to encourage the children to practice the faith of their Catholic mother, he is working against great odds. Example is more powerful than precept. If the latter does not square with the example, it is likely to be of little value, as the following incident illustrates.

In a home where the non-Catholic father strove to fulfill the promise he made at the time of his marriage to see that the children were reared in the Catholic faith, there was every outward appearance of success crowning his efforts. On Sunday morning the father prided himself on the regularity with which he called the children and saw that they went to Mass with their mother. He himself remained at home

reading the poor man's bible—the Sunday newspaper. In such an environment where the paternal example was at right angles with the precept, the children grew to maturity.

Finally on one Sunday morning when he called his son for Mass, the latter refused to arise. Astonished, the father said to him, "Why, what does this mean? Have I not trained you from early youth to attend to your religious duties? Why are you not going today the same as on other Sundays?" "Father," replied the son, "you have always called me and told me to go, but you have never gone yourself. I am no child any longer. I am a man. And I figure that if you don't have to go, neither do I."

The logic of his contention the father could not deny. Little had he realized that his own example was undermining the foundations of the faith he was seeking by precept alone to build for his child. Thus in every home where there is a division in religious faith, the force of parental example is fashioning slowly but surely its tangled imprint upon the impressionable mind and memory of the children—an imprint they will carry with them to their dying day.

#### *Influence of Example*

As this point is crucial in securing a correct understanding as to why the Church does not consider a mixed marriage as the ideal, let us present one further illustration. In a large city parish a class of little children had just been prepared to receive their First Holy Communion. The pastor had established the beautiful custom of having the parents kneel at the side of each child and receive their Eucharistic Lord along with their offspring. As he went along the rail, distributing the bread of angels to his young communicants and to their proud parents, he could not wholly close his eyes to the beauty, innocence and happiness radiating from the upturned faces of the little children. Then of a sudden he came upon one, a little girl of eight, whose reddened eyes and saddened face contrasted sharply with the holy joy mantling the countenances of her schoolmates.

On one side the mother was kneeling. But on the other there was . . . a vacancy. Thinking that some foolish scruple was disturbing her, the priest bent low and said: "Don't worry my dear child, Jesus will comfort and bless you."

Then after placing upon her tongue the heavenly manna, he whispered: "Come into the sacristy for a moment after the Mass." When later she appeared with her mother, the secret came out.

Appareled in her dress of white, with a wreath of flowers upon her brow, and the smile on her face mirroring the joy in her heart, the little child, just before leaving for Mass, had turned to her father with the words: "Won't you please come with me, Daddy, and kneel near me when I make my First Holy Communion?" "I don't believe in such things," the father had replied and walked away. If the father had taken a dagger and plunged it into the heart of his little girl, he could scarcely have broken her heart more completely. Taught by the sisters in school and by her mother that she would receive her Lord and Saviour in Holy Communion, the words of her father, not intended to hurt her, had actually stabbed her to the quick.

#### *Influence of Home*

Example does count. The influence of the home is more powerful than any school. For it teaches not by precept alone but by example as well. Parents are designed by God and nature to be the child's most effective teachers. If there is disagreement on the matter of religion between these two teachers, it is difficult to see how the pupil can escape the penalty in the form of religious confusion and bewilderment.

It is true that there are those who say: "Difference in religion need not affect the happiness of the family life, nor mar its unity." If all such could have witnessed the crushing effect of the father's words upon his little child, they would realize that they are in a world of speculative theories and not in our actual world of flesh and blood, where tears flow and hearts ache because a family is cut in twain by the sword of religious differences. Religion does count in the happiness of the family. It is a bond that unites or a sword that tends at least to separate. It touches the unity of the family at a crucial point. There are exceptions, of course, but they only prove the rule.

#### *Mixed Marriages*

"If the Church has a law forbidding mixed marriages, why does she grant so many dispensations therefrom, thus

allowing such marriages to take place?" Such is a question often on the lips of our non-Catholic friends. While holding fast to the ideal of a Catholic marriage, the Church understands that the ideal is not capable of realization in every instance and under all circumstances. Her vast army of more than four hundred and thirty million members are scattered out among all the nations of the world. In daily contact with such neighbors, surrounding us on every hand, the Church realizes that the occasional development of friendships and courtships leading to the marriage of a Catholic with a non-Catholic is in such an environment simply inevitable. She does not bury her head in the sand, ignoring unpleasant realities. She faces them honestly and squarely. She applies her laws in the light of actual conditions, having always in mind the welfare and happiness, temporal and eternal, of her children.

#### *Dispensation Requirements*

When circumstances prevent the attainment of the ideal, then the Church legislates to attain the next best result. Rather than say to one of her children, who, deeply in love with a non-Catholic, feels that her life's happiness is conditioned upon her marrying him, "You can never, under any circumstances, marry such a person," the Church follows a kindlier and more sympathetic policy. It is a policy which reflects the Church's twin solicitude for the promotion of human happiness and the preservation of the faith of her children. She grants a dispensation to such an individual for sufficient grounds, permitting her to marry a Protestant or a person unbaptized in any faith. She does this, however, only when she has been given assurances of the proper safeguarding of the faith of the Catholic party and of the children.

These assurances are contained in the following promises which are signed by the non-Catholic party in the presence of two witnesses: "I, the undersigned, not a member of the Catholic Church, wishing to contract marriage with N. N., a member of the Catholic Church, intend to do so with the understanding that the marriage tie cannot be dissolved, except by death, and promise her on my word of honor, that she shall enjoy the free exercise of her Catholic religion, and that

all the children of either sex, born of this marriage, shall be baptized and educated in the faith and according to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. I further promise that no marriage ceremony other than that to be performed by the Catholic priest shall take place." The Catholic party likewise gives his signed word pledging to baptize and rear the children in the Catholic faith.

### *Is It Narrow-minded?*

"Is it not narrow-minded and unreasonable for the Church to ask that all the children be reared in the Catholic faith? Would it not be fairer if the Church allowed the boys to be brought up in the faith of the father and the girls in that of the mother?" Such are questions frequently raised by non-Catholics. The answer is: Underlying these questions is the assumption, commonly made by the non-Catholic, that all religions are about the same—equally good and equally true. On that assumption the Church's stand is one-sided. But that assumption is false.

Christ founded not many churches, but one Church. Catholics honestly believe that theirs is that Church. On the basis of actual fact and historical truth, the Church's policy is not unreasonable, but on the contrary, is the only one which demands for truth rights which error does not possess. If the Church were to compromise, allow some to be brought up outside her fold, she would be false to her divinely appointed mission of teaching to all mankind the truths taught by Christ. The Church is, therefore, under a divine obligation of protecting the faith of her children and of her children's children. The Church not only believes in her divine origin and mission, but she has the courage to translate that belief into action.

For the same reason the Church finds herself obligated to require that the marriage be performed by a Catholic priest. To sanction the marriage of one of her children with a non-Catholic before a Protestant minister would mean that the Church was implicitly recognizing such a denomination, founded by a mere man, to be of equal validity with the Church established by Jesus Christ. This the Church could do only at the cost of her intellectual integrity. Then the Catholic Church regards marriage as a sacrament, while

most Protestant ministers do not. With no wish to hurt the feelings of our dear Protestant friends, the Church finds herself compelled by the clear consciousness of her divine origin and of the mission divinely appointed unto her, to give to error no more recognition than her divine Founder gave to it.

### *A Form of Treason*

To place the churches founded by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley, Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy and by Mrs. Aimee Semple MacPherson-Hutton on the same plane as the Church founded by Christ, and to clothe them with the same authority, would be for her to commit the sin of apostasy. That is why the Church forbids her children to attempt to contract matrimony before the minister of an heretical sect. Those unworthy members who deliberately and wilfully violate that solemn law the Church punishes with excommunication. For they are guilty not only of grievous disobedience to the Church, but also of treason to the faith of Jesus Christ.

Catholics who attempt marriage before a civil officer, such as the justice of the peace, sin mortally and do not contract a valid religious marriage. They do not, however, incur the penalty of excommunication, because they have not committed the sin of apostasy or of treason to the faith. Since the *Ne Temere* decree of Pius X, which went into effect on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1908, a Catholic can be validly married only before a Catholic priest. This legislation applies only to Catholics, as the Church does not legislate for non-Catholics as such. Contrary to a charge frequently made, the Church recognizes the validity of the marriage of Protestants, contracted either before their own ministers or before a civil officer.

"Is it not true that your Church, although ostensibly opposing mixed marriages, nevertheless grants a dispensation when sufficient money is offered for the same?" Such is the notion existing among many of our separated friends. It is, however, without foundation. The Council of Trent decreed that marriage dispensations, if granted at all, should be given without charge.<sup>1</sup> The same law has been promul-

<sup>1</sup> Sess. iv., De Reg. Mat. 5.



gated many times by the Popes and by the Sacred Congregations. The Church only permits a small donation for diocesan and Roman chancery expenses. For it is obvious that the issuing of documents, and the recording of the same, entails some clerical and office expense, which should be met by the persons necessitating such service. The amount is always small, and the poor are explicitly dispensed even from this.<sup>1</sup>

### *Supremacy of Truth*

At a good-will seminar of Protestants, Jews and Catholics held recently at the University of Illinois for the purpose of removing needless sources of friction in the civic relations of these various groups, a Protestant spokesman pointed in a friendly manner to the Church's marriage laws as a source of such antagonism. "The Church's requirement," he said, "that the marriage of a Catholic and a Protestant must take place only before a Catholic priest and that all the children must be raised in the Catholic faith is irritating to many Protestants. To us it seems not only a one-sided arrangement, but also a crafty device whereby the Catholic Church ensnares many of our members into her fold. Could not this requirement be modified, so that the Protestant would have equal rights in the selection of the officiating minister and in the religious rearing of the children?"

By way of reply, the writer pointed out, as previously indicated, that this question cannot properly be answered by itself alone. It is necessary to go much deeper, to raise and to answer the question underlying his whole viewpoint, namely, are all religions of equal validity, all equally good and equally true? Or is there but one religion, founded by Jesus Christ, which possesses rights and authority which no sect founded by mere man can properly claim, which believes that Christian marriage was committed to her as a sacrament? We undertake to show on objective evidence, by the facts of history, by the words and deeds of Christ, by the teaching of the Apostles, by the voice of tradition, by the unbroken continuity of Apostolic succession, by the overwhelming testimony of impartial historians of every faith, that the Catholic Church was not only founded by Jesus

<sup>1</sup>Canon 1056.

Christ, but also that she was in existence for almost fifteen centuries before Protestantism first saw the light of day. Throughout His whole ministry Christ insisted upon unity of faith. Following the example of her divine Founder, the Church does likewise.

She would be guilty of disloyalty to her deepest convictions if she compromised in her doctrines with any of the creeds founded in opposition to the faith of Jesus Christ. It is true that this uncompromising stand of the Church in regard to the truth of her teachings, and her steadfast refusal to place on a basis of equal validity creeds which contradict her doctrines, may not be particularly pleasing to non-Catholics. It may even irritate them, as the speaker declared. But does it differ from the position of her divine Founder who solemnly declared: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned"?<sup>1</sup>

### *A Crafty Device?*

In regard to the second charge of the Protestant spokesman that the Church's marriage legislation is a crafty device by which she seeks to ensnare as many Protestants as possible from their own denominations into her fold, the answer is obvious. If this were true, the Church would not be forbidding mixed marriages, but she would be encouraging them. The fact is, however, that she warns her children against them.

She displays her disapproval by forbidding them to be celebrated in the church. They are to take place in the rectory. The banns proclaiming the approaching occurrence of such a marriage are omitted. The blessing of the wedding ring, as well as the nuptial blessing, is likewise omitted. In all these ways the Church drives home to her children that a mixed marriage is not her ideal. From long experience she knows that the offspring of such marriages not infrequently grow up unaffiliated with any church and remain throughout their life indifferent to all organized religion. She would much prefer to have them members of some church than believers in none.

Furthermore, the thought of ensnaring or entrapping

<sup>1</sup>Mark 16:16.

through subtle craft any human being into her fold is entirely alien to the whole spirit of the Church. She will admit to membership no one who does not come of his own free will, and then only after he is profoundly convinced of the truth of her teachings as the result of a thorough course of instruction. She would not dream of admitting a person who was under the slightest coercion. Nor would she receive a person whose decision was the result of mere impulse and not grounded on intellectual convictions.

In her eyes membership in the household of the faith is a priceless treasure. It can never be imposed from without, but must always come from the intellect and the will of man. Our Protestant friends need have no fear, therefore, that the Catholic Church is engaged in a conspiracy to deplete their ranks through her laws in regard to mixed marriages. The Church is happy to see them marry within their own faiths, as she is delighted to see her children achieve her ideal of a Catholic marriage, where the faith will be vivified through united action instead of being weakened by divergence in creed and in practice.

#### *A Basic Difference*

A recent pronouncement of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America commented unfavorably upon the requirements of the Catholic Church in the case of mixed marriages. Replying to such criticism, Archbishop Hanna of San Francisco pointed out that the Church does not encourage such alliances but is in agreement with the leaders of Protestantism in stressing the advisability of marriage among members of the same religious faith. What more can the Church do, than she is now doing, to discourage mixed marriages and to encourage her children to marry within their own fold? The fact that the vast majority of non-Catholics experience little or no religious scruple in signing the required promises testifies to the levity with which denominational ties rest upon them.

This is due to the cardinal principle of Protestantism, namely, the supremacy of private judgment in religion. Acting on this principle, a Protestant suffers no qualms of conscience in renouncing his previous creed and in embracing another which appeals more to him. He knows that his denomination cannot consistently bid him nay. For according

to this root principle of Protestantism, whence have sprung such a bewildering variety of sects and creeds, the individual becomes the supreme court from which there is no appeal.

In the Catholic religion, on the other hand, the principle of authority, in contradistinction to that of private judgment, is recognized as supreme. The authority of Jesus Christ, and of the Church which He authorized to teach in His name, is regarded by the Catholic as a safe and reliable guide in matters of religious belief. The fundamental principle of his faith does not admit, therefore, of the flexibility by which the Protestant can pass so easily from one creed to another. Then, too, may it not truly be said that no Protestant denomination feels sufficiently sure of itself as to proclaim that it is the one true church of Jesus Christ? The corporate uncertainty that characterizes practically all the Protestant denominations today reflects itself in the unsettledness and the groping for greater security of truth, which is manifest among vast numbers of their nominal adherents. These are factors which must be recognized in any honest and impartial study of the shifting of religious affiliations occasioned by mixed marriages.

#### *Love of God and Man*

In conclusion it can be truthfully said that the Church has never envisaged, and does not now envisage, mixed marriages as occasions for increasing her membership at the expense of Protestantism. She wishes her children to live in peace and friendship with their fellow citizens of every faith. She is anxious to remove every needless source of friction which carries over into the civic relationships of her members with those of other faiths. In her marriage legislation she has at heart the welfare and happiness not only of her own children but of those who are without. Rather than blast forever the dreams of happiness of a non-Catholic, by depriving him of all possibility of marrying the girl he loves, the Church permits such a union, provided proper safeguards for the faith are assured.

Does this maternal attitude not reflect an admirable blending of unfaltering loyalty to the truth with a tender solicitude for the happiness of all people, Catholic and non-

Catholic alike? Can our fellow Americans justly criticize the Church for her stand on mixed marriage, when she does everything possible, short of betrayal of her divinely appointed trust, to enable the non-Catholic to realize his dreams of conjugal love and happiness? In the Church's attitude on this vexing problem, our fellow citizens of other faiths, who have followed this discussion with open minds and in a spirit of impartiality, will perceive, we are confident, a reflection of the love and loyalty of the Church to her divine Founder and of her love and devotion for all His children.

### Discussion Aids

Is the Church intolerant because she does not believe in mixed marriages? Explain why the Church is opposed to mixed marriages, (1) for the sake of the contracting parties; (2) for the sake of their children. Why are dispensations sometimes granted? What are the requirements for such dispensations? Why are these requirements not unreasonable? Why does the Church forbid attempted marriage before a minister of a heretical sect? What is the penalty for such an attempt? Why? Can a Catholic be validly married before a civil officer? Is the penalty excommunication? Why not? What does the marriage legislation of 1908 make necessary for Catholics? Does the Church recognize the validity of Protestant marriages contracted before their own ministers or a civil officer? Is there a money charge for dispensations? Explain. How explain to a Protestant that the law of the Church on mixed marriage is neither "one-sided" nor a "crafty-device"? Explain the attitude of the Church as one of brotherly love.

### Practices:

Help to organize a social movement in your parish to foster acquaintance between Catholic young men and women.

Provide Catholic literature on marriage for your children.

Pray for a happy Catholic marriage.

## Chapter XXVII

### CATHOLIC MARRIAGE: HOW ACHIEVE IT?

#### *Constructive Measures for the Achievement of the Church's Ideal*

In many messages our Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, has called upon the Catholic laity to take a more active part in the extension of Christ's kingdom on earth. His Holiness has pointed out that the penetration of Christ's teaching into the social and economic life of humanity can be accomplished not by the efforts of priests alone, but only by the whole-hearted cooperation and assistance of all the faithful. Catholic Action, stressed so frequently by the Holy Father, means essentially that our laity must abandon their purely passive role wherein they are merely the recipients of priestly ministrations, and assume an active part in the application of the Christian evangel to the social, political and industrial life of the world today.

There are few, if any, fields where the achievement of the Church's ideal is so directly dependent upon lay cooperation as in that of marriage. The Church's ideal is a Catholic marriage, a union where both husband and wife are members of the same holy faith, founded by Christ and propagated by the Apostles and their successors to the present day. In such unions the faith is most likely to be strengthened in the parents and handed down intact to the children.

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America has recently commented unfavorably upon the consequences of mixed marriages, and has pointed to them as a source of friction in the relations of Protestants and Catholics. The Catholic Church likewise agrees that such alliances are inadvisable, and are conducive to the weakening of the faith of the parents and to the loss of the same in the children. It is in no spirit of narrow-mindedness, therefore, or out of a lack of regard for the high character and sterling integrity of our fellow citizens of other faiths that the Church encourages



her children to marry within the fold. In so doing the Church has the support of the officials of Protestantism in America.

#### *How Assist?*

How may our laity assist in the attainment of this ideal, and thus remove a source of irritation to many of our dear non-Catholic friends, who view the Church's requirements for a mixed marriage as a device to ensnare outsiders from their own denominations? The answer is simple. By marrying their own co-religionists. This implies, however, that Catholic young men must have ample opportunities of meeting in a social way young ladies of their own faith. It raises the whole question of a Catholic social life calculated to promote acquaintance and friendship among our young people of both sexes. In a population where we are outnumbered five to one, it is obvious that if no organized effort be made to foster a Catholic social life, partners for life will be chosen in increasing numbers from those outside the fold.

The hunger for the love and companionship of a helpmate who will lessen the sorrows of life and increase its joys has been planted in the bosom of mankind by God Himself. Instead of ignoring such a craving, or of making light of it, as is so often done, it should be recognized as the reflection of a divine plan. The necessity of making adequate provision for the satisfaction of such an innate and universal longing should be faced honestly and squarely. Its fulfillment should not be left to the whims and caprices of blind chance.

Susan Marr Spalding has portrayed the whimsicalities of chance, or fate as she terms it, in bringing some individuals from the opposite ends of the earth together, and keeping others nearby from ever meeting. She writes:

*"Two shall be born, the whole wide world apart,  
And shall speak in different tongues, and have no  
thought*

*Each of the other's being; and have no heed;  
And these, o'er unknown seas to unknown lands  
Shall cross, escaping wreck, defying death;  
And, all unconsciously, shape every act to this one  
end*

*That, one day, out of darkness, they shall meet  
And read life's meaning in each other's eyes.*

*"And two shall walk some narrow way of life  
So nearly side by side that, should one turn  
Ever so little space to right or left,  
They needs must stand acknowledged face to face  
And yet, with wistful eyes that never meet,  
With groping hands that never clasp; and lips  
Calling in vain to ears that never hear;  
They seek each other all their weary days  
And die unsatisfied—and that is fate."*

While admitting that the events she describes are of frequent occurrence, particularly in America, whither peoples come from all the countries of the earth, the conclusion she draws—"and that is fate"—cannot stand the searchlight of careful analysis. We are the carvers of our own fate, the hewers of our own destiny. The so-called decrees of fate, we write with our own fingers. That two young people, congenial in culture, tastes, character and of the same religious faith, living "nearly side by side" never meet, is not to be attributed to the decrees of blind fate, but to ourselves, to the individuals and the social group of which they are members. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings."

Is Catholic social life so organized as to enable our young people to attain the Church's ideal of a Catholic marriage? Alas! Here is our great weakness. A weakness pointed out by prelate, priest and layman, and deplored by all alike.

#### *Segregation in School*

In order to suggest proper constructive measures, let us first glance at our present social organization to see how difficult it renders social acquaintance among our young people and thus tends to defeat the very end which we strive at least in theory to achieve, namely, Catholic marriage. Let us begin with our schools. Above the grades it is the common practice, where resources permit, to segregate the sexes. In separate buildings the girls are taught by sisters, and boys by brothers and priests. This segregation of the sexes during high school is continued into our colleges and universities. Without any expression as to the relative merits of the

educational efficiency of segregation and of coeducation, we merely point here to the fact that our educational system keeps our young people during the years of adolescence and of young manhood and womanhood in two separate worlds where points of contact are few and far between. It is only in recent years that some of our Catholic universities and colleges have been willing to hazard the entrance of young women into their halls of learning. Apparently the distraction has not proved too great. For the practice is markedly on the increase.

Not only has the custom been to establish separate high schools and colleges for the education of young men and women, but also to permit few, if any, social relations between the student groups at the two schools. Even when such colleges are adjacent, prefects and teachers have exhausted all their ingenuity in keeping the students from meeting one another. Huge walls, built of stone or of prohibitions rigorously enforced, prevented the acquaintance of Catholic college men with Catholic college women. Such acquaintances as were formed were largely surreptitious—achieved by climbing over a stone wall or outwitting a prefect who momentarily relaxed his vigilance.

Until recently the sisters in charge of a college for girls, situated in the vicinity of an institution of higher learning for Catholic men, accompanied their girls returning on the train to a large city where most of them lived. This they did for fear the young ladies might meet some of the Catholic men returning on the same train. The acquaintanceship and friendship of Catholic women with young men of the same faith and of similar culture was strictly taboo. In their home parishes, these young people listened to sermons on the dangers and evils of mixed marriages. Instead of helping them by constructive measures to avoid such marriages, our colleges have at times unwittingly tended to render such unions a not unlikely occurrence.

If we were to set about to bring together two groups of Catholic young men and women of congenial interests and similar culture, with a view to fostering happy Catholic marriages, where else would we turn but to the students at the very institutions which were striving by might and main

to keep them apart? Is it any wonder that the graduates of our Catholic colleges and universities, in about the same proportion as their co-religionists who did not enjoy the same educational opportunities, have sought their life partners from among those outside the fold? The wonder is that they have not done so in even larger numbers. Happily the situation is improving. High schools and especially colleges, located in the vicinity of similar institutions for Catholics of the opposite gender, do not frown so severely as formerly upon the formation of friendships between their respective student bodies.

The simple truth, so persistently ignored in the past; that such students will ultimately marry, and if they are not allowed to meet Catholics of congenial culture, are likely to marry non-Catholics, is at least beginning to be recognized. That there is still much ground to be traveled in this direction is recognized by none more frankly than by our Catholic educators themselves. As one educator put it recently to the writer: "Unwittingly we have acted on the assumption that most of our students were preparing to enter the religious life, ignoring the practical necessities for their entrance into the matrimonial state, into which about 95 per cent plan to go."

#### *Social Life in Parishes*

What about our parishes? Do not these have organizations designed to enable our young people to meet one another in a social way? The problem, of course, is much simpler in rural districts and in smaller urban parishes where practically all the members know one another. In our large city parishes, however, the problem is much more difficult. Pastors of such parishes generally acknowledge the lack of a social organization that solves this problem to their satisfaction. Competing with commercial entertainment of many kinds, it is difficult for the officers of parish societies for young people to get their members out in large numbers. Indeed, clergy and laity will agree alike that the failure to maintain a vigorous social life among our young people, giving them such ample opportunity to meet, among their own, congenial helpmates so as to counteract the usual preponderance of the day's contact with outsiders, is one of the

most glaring weaknesses of our organization—or of our lack of it.

With the idea of getting the viewpoint of the laity on the causes of mixed marriages, the writer requested a number of scholarly and devoted lay men and women in different parts of our country to favor him with a statement of their observations on this subject. The gist of most of the replies is that we allow acquaintance to be largely a matter of chance, and that we do little or nothing of a constructive nature to promote friendship among our young people.

Thus a staunch Catholic layman, whose long and distinguished service to public education has brought honor both to himself and to his Church, writes in the following frank manner: "I never could feel that the sermons on mixed marriages, badly needed as they are, did very much good. It seems to me that, if the clergy would give some attention to the social organization of the members of their parishes in bringing the young people together in social relationships, it would do far more good than all the sermons that could be preached on mixed marriages. The notion of the Church on coeducation tends to keep the sexes apart in the schools. This may or may not be a good thing, but it is often much easier for Catholic young men to meet Protestant young women than it is to meet Catholic young women, and the opposite is also very true.

"It seems to me that the leakage from the Church is chiefly through mixed marriages. That is the reason for the above comments. The Protestant churches are organized pretty largely upon a social basis, as you understand. The Catholic churches are organized in no sense upon a social basis. As an undergraduate and graduate student in a number of colleges and universities away from home, I always found it much easier to get acquainted with Protestants than with Catholics. Catholics make no effort whatever to look after the stranger in the parish, and although I have been, as a young man, in a number of university communities, I never found it at all easy to get acquainted with Catholic families."

#### *Outstretched Hand?*

The foregoing sentiment reflects the views of the other

lay contributors to this investigation and of the overwhelming majority of our laity with whom the writer has discussed the subject. One of the contributors states the case thus succinctly: "Mixed marriages reflect the unsociability that characterizes most of our parishes. I do not think I exaggerate when I say that the average city parish is about as reserved, unsociable and unfriendly as any group of similar size to be found anywhere in the country. The Catholic social consciousness, the corporate sense of friendliness, the outstretched hand to the lonely stranger in our midst, the friendly interest in the young man or woman hungering wistfully for social companionship—these are woefully lacking."

Is it any wonder, then, that mixed marriages result, and that they will continue to increase as long as the present social frigidity within our parishes continues? The Church rightly stresses the supernatural and the religious elements in her services. But supplementing her devotions, and auxiliary to them, might there not be developed a Catholic social consciousness and a sense of friendliness among her children?

#### *Catholic Social Aloofness*

Other lay contributors write in the same vein. One reports that because of the nature of his work he has had occasion to reside in a dozen different cities for periods ranging from six months to three years. During his attendance at parish churches in those cities, he states, he has rarely found an opportunity of meeting his co-religionists through any activity sponsored by the Church. Social life among the members of most of the parishes was practically nonexistent. The opportunities for social contact for young people are afforded chiefly by agencies which have no connection with the Church, and the result is that our young people meet about five times as many non-Catholic young folks as they do those of their own faith. Under such circumstances the wonder is not that there are so many mixed marriages, but rather that they are not even more numerous.

Another lay contributor reports that he and his family recently returned from an auto trip to the Western Coast



where they spent several months. Naturally they attended Mass at many different churches, but met practically no one through such attendance. On their return they happened to be passing through a large city in the Middle West on Sunday morning. From a passerby they inquired the directions to the nearest Catholic church. In their anxiety to be present at Mass on time, they hurried in without stopping to observe the name—the Episcopal Church—carved upon the cornerstone.

When they perceived the slim attendance they began to wonder if they were really in a Catholic church. But a clergyman wearing the proper vestments appeared to be celebrating Mass at an altar. When the service ended, a number of the people came over and greeted the visitors in a friendly way, and said how happy they were to welcome them to their service. "Then," reports the contributor, "we knew we were not in a Catholic church! For Catholics never display any interest or friendliness towards visitors in their midst."

We are proud of the fact that the Church has remained true to her essential nature as a religious institution. We are proud of the fact that the emphasis in her service is upon the strictly religious element, the worship of God, and the offering of praise and sacrifice and homage to the Most High. Not for any price would we allow that emphasis to be minimized or to be shifted to any other value. Yet it is well to remember that the Church is composed of human beings who have been endowed by God with a social nature. The Church has likewise always sought to promote the social happiness of mankind. Her charitable and philanthropic institutions ministering to the sick and dying, the delinquent and homeless, the feeble-minded and the insane, the orphans and the aged, have won for her the admiration of the world.

In a society, however, where we are outnumbered about five to one, there would seem to be the need of special organized efforts in every parish to bring our young men and women together in a social way, to foster acquaintance and friendship among them, and by these constructive measures for the promotion of Catholic marriage to lessen the likelihood of its opposite. This would appear to be one of the

steps most urgently needed if we are to stem the ever-increasing tide of mixed marriages.

### *Fostering Catholic Marriages*

In a city parish of some four hundred families, where mixed marriages were numerous, the pastor set out to see what could be done in lessening their number and in promoting Catholic marriages. He organized the young people of the parish into a society, giving them considerable latitude in arranging dramatics, entertainments, and socials of various kinds under proper supervision. He assisted the officers in working up a splendid attendance at their socials, enlisting the cooperation of several young married couples as a "floating committee" in helping everyone, even the most timid, to get acquainted. After two or three years he reported that the mixed marriages had notably decreased and the Catholic marriages had increased by leaps and bounds.

"Father," he writes, "it means work and lots of it, but it's eminently worth while. Too many of us are content to follow the easier procedure of simply denouncing mixed marriages from the altar without doing anything to promote Catholic marriages. It isn't fair to our young people. They are more sinned against than sinning. If we were not deaf and dumb and blind, we would hear the cries for companionship, and see in their faces the hunger for friendship which God has planted in their nature. Young people appreciate interest which a pastor takes in promoting their social happiness, and show it by their greater loyalty and enthusiasm in the work of the parish. It develops a Catholic morale and offers a powerful reenforcement to the spiritual work of the Church."

### *Work For Laity Also*

As one of the clergy, I think I may acknowledge in the name of my brother priests that much still remains to be done by us in initiating constructive measures to foster Catholic marriages and in supplying leadership to execute such plans. But may I not ask my Catholic lay readers if they too have not been remiss in this matter? Why do not our Catholic laity turn out in larger numbers at the socials planned for their benefit? For almost a quarter of a century I have been ministering to Catholic young men and women

of university age, seeking among other things to promote acquaintance and friendship among them and thus to establish a strong Catholic *esprit de corps*. Like many other pastors, I have never been able to understand why our young people feign such indifference, if not even reluctance, at meeting those of the other gender. I have been working among them long enough to know that inwardly and in reality they are glad and anxious to meet one another. But why they insist on making it more difficult for the pastor to promote acquaintance among them in a systematic way, by feigning unwillingness to go through the ordeal of shaking hands and saying "Hello," is not easy to understand.

Let me invite our Catholic readers to cooperate generously and wholeheartedly with their pastors in galvanizing into action the moribund social life of many of our parishes. Let me assure our readers that their spiritual guides will be only too glad to have them initiate measures that will promote Catholic acquaintance and foster marriages between those of the household of the faith. In many respects the laity are better situated to promote such social measures. They will earn the lasting gratitude of their pastors as well as of those whom they assist in finding congenial helpmates for the journey along life's highway.

#### A Second Measure

One other way in which our laity can render yeoman service in promoting Catholic marriages is by bringing non-Catholics with whom they are keeping company to a priest for a thorough course of instruction in the truths of our holy religion. In most dioceses in our country there is a requirement that the non-Catholic party receive six instructions, covering matrimony and a few of the other fundamentals of the Catholic religion. While the value of such a brief glance is not to be minimized, it is always better to bring the non-Catholic to the pastor several months before the contemplated wedding is to occur, to enable him to receive a complete course of instruction in the truths of our holy faith.

Great numbers of such non-Catholics, probably the vast majority who come with an open mind, will find the credentials of the Church's divine origin and mission so overwhelm-

ing and the beauty and helpfulness of her teachings so appealing as to prompt them to return to the Church in which their forebears worshipped for fifteen centuries or more. Their misconceptions will fade away before the light of truth. They will see that what they have fought against are not the real teachings of the Church but the caricatures of such as drawn by her enemies. What appeared at the beginning as a mixed marriage ends by becoming a Catholic one.

In the achievement of such an end, the attitude of the Catholic party is of paramount importance. If the Catholic displays indifference, gives little or no encouragement to take a complete course of instruction, and is perfectly satisfied with the fulfillment of the minimum requirements, there is little prospect of winning the outsider to the faith of Christ. It is harder for the pastor to contend against such an attitude of cold indifference than it is to overcome the prejudices and misconceptions of the non-Catholic. More influential and more eloquent to him than the words of any pastor is the voice of his beloved. If that voice is cold and indifferent, the budding interest of the neophyte is speedily killed. He becomes content with the mere gesture of attendance at the six required instructions.

#### A Helpful Attitude

On the other hand, if the Catholic displays a profound solicitude in having her friend secure the whole picture of the Church's teachings, if she tells him frankly what a world of happiness the practice of her religion has brought her, the non-Catholic will be stimulated to make an honest and thorough investigation of the religion of Christ. How natural it is for him to say: "If your religion has meant so much to you, why can it not mean as much to me? I will look into it fairly and honestly, and if it convinces my reason of its truthfulness, I will not hesitate to embrace it." That is all the Church asks of any one. For she knows that the objective evidence of her divine origin and of her commission to teach all mankind is so overwhelming as to carry conviction to the open mind, aided and enlightened by the grace of God.

Father Hugh L. McMenamin, pastor of the Cathedral

in Denver, has given a splendid demonstration of what can be achieved along these lines. With the cooperation of his assistants, he has averaged about sixty-five converts per year for the last twenty-four years. In generous compliance with the writer's request for a statement of his experiences in this matter, he writes: "With a little zeal, *devout Catholics can be made out of nine of every ten young women* who wish to marry or have married Catholic young men. Similar results but in greatly reduced proportion can be obtained in those mixed marriages in which the non-Catholic party is the man.

"Almost every young man and every young woman," he writes, "who desires to marry a Catholic can be induced to take instructions. How? When the non-Catholic party calls upon us to arrange for a marriage, we explain the customary promises, devoting fifteen minutes or half an hour to that explanation, pointing out that a Protestant who is quite willing to admit that one religion is as good as another can conscientiously sign them. The Catholic party may not, however, conscientiously make such concessions. Then having obtained the signature, we point out the necessity of his knowing something of the Catholic religion in order that he may the more willingly and more intelligently fulfill the promises, and moreover in order that he may be able to sympathize with the Catholic party in the practice of his or her religion. In almost every instance the promise to take instructions will be given.

#### *Change in Methods*

"When all is said and done, you will find this to be one of the most fruitful sources of conversions, and it minimizes the evils which often result from mixed marriages. One such convert is worth more than two or three others. You have saved the faith of children. We have been asked: 'Why are you so enthusiastic over those converts who enter the Church merely because they wish to marry a Catholic?' We answer: 'We know none such.' We do know of many who submitted to a course of instructions for that reason but their motives changed. Let me cite one interesting instance out of many.

"A young woman brought a non-Catholic man to the writer. She made it plain that she would marry him on one

condition only, namely, that he become a Catholic and insisted that he take instructions. She departed for the East for a vacation in her old home. He came twice a week for instructions. Upon her return they were to be married. About the fourth week we received a letter from the young woman announcing her engagement to an old sweetheart and a package containing a diamond ring which she requested that we give to the young man. As may be presumed, there was little talk of instruction when the young man called and received his ring, but when saying good-night, he added: 'When do you want to see me, Father?' He continued his instruction. He was received into the Church. He has since married a girl whom he induced to take instructions. They are raising a growing Catholic family."

#### *Achieving the Ideal*

To summarize: The Catholic marriage is the Church's ideal. To lessen mixed marriages and to increase Catholic ones, we propose two constructive measures which invite the cooperation and challenge the zeal of the many Catholics who read these lines.

The first is the establishment of a vigorous Catholic social life which will enable our young people to make a sufficient number of acquaintances within the fold as to enable every young man and woman who has the normal healthy ambition to marry, to find a devoted Catholic helpmate for the journey along life's winding pathway.

Occasionally at these social gatherings the priest will avail himself of a golden opportunity to present the Catholic marriage and the mixed marriage in their true aspects to people who are actually concerned.

The second is to bring all non-Catholics contemplating marriage with Catholics to thorough courses of instruction where the overwhelming evidence of the Church's divine origin and divinely appointed mission to teach all mankind will, with God's unfailing grace, lead the vast majority into the Church of Jesus Christ. The carrying out of these two measures in a whole-hearted and vigorous manner will go a long way toward the elimination of danger to the faith of parents and of children, toward the unifying of the family life and toward the promotion of abiding human happiness.



### Discussion Aids

What is Catholic Action? Can you apply the definition to promoting Catholic marriages? Is it desirable to encourage acquaintanceship between the sexes in neighboring Catholic institutions of learning? Why? What constructive measures might be taken in parishes to foster social relationships? What steps should be taken by the Catholic party in a prospective marriage to bring the faith to the non-Catholic party? In what two ways, then, is Catholic Action exemplified in fostering Catholic marriages?

#### Practices:

Help to organize young people's discussion clubs in your parish. Let each meeting conclude with a social hour.

Attend meetings of your parish societies.

Take seriously our late Holy Father's invitation to Catholic Action.

### Chapter XXVIII

## THE CHRISTIAN HOME: A NATION'S BULWARK

### *The Home is the Supreme Training-School for Youth*

One of the historic shrines of France, visited annually by thousands of travelers, is Malmaison, the old home of Napoleon and Josephine. What Stratford-on-Avon is to England, what Mount Vernon is to America, Malmaison is to France. Situated a few miles outside of Paris, on the road to St. Germain, it was the scene of many of the dramatic incidents in the life of the First Consul. It was here that Napoleon came after his brilliant victories in Europe and in Egypt. In this retreat of sylvan loveliness he passed his happiest days with Josephine. Here too was gathered a court that reflected all the glories of France. No wonder that the French have made the home a national shrine whither they bring their children to feast their eyes upon the memorials of their former greatness, as the rulers of all Europe.

Each room is arranged with the furniture in the same manner as when occupied by the great Napoleon. There is the bed in which he slept, the desk at which he wrote. There is the very pen with which he mapped the campaigns which led to his great victories at Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena and the Pyramids—victories which changed the map of Europe.

As the visitor goes from this room, exuding its martial atmosphere, with its echo of clashing arms and cannonading, into the chamber of Josephine, he is struck by the contrast. No martial note here. There are the little incidentals that minister to the needs of womanhood and echo forth the dominant notes in her heart—the notes of love and domesticity. There is the pretty little clock by Chaudet depicting the Three Graces, the rug with the lonely swan in the centre, the little sculpture showing Cupid hastening towards Psyche.

In the centre of the room, dominating everything, is the harp played by Josephine in the days of her happiness.

#### *A Broken Harp*

It stands there now, mute and silent. Its strings are broken. To every informed visitor, that harp stands not as the symbol of the sweet music of domestic peace and concord. It stands as the jarring reminder of the raucous notes of domestic strife. With a silent eloquence it tells the sad story of a broken home, a family torn asunder, a sacred vow that was trampled upon, a domestic tragedy that will mar forever the escutcheon of the great Bonaparte. While successful in conquering Europe, in building new empires, establishing new dynasties, placing his brothers upon the thrones of Spain, Naples and Holland, Napoleon failed in the building of the most important empire of all—the empire of his own home.

Like Alexander the Great, sitting astride his steed in distant Ecbatana and weeping because there were no more worlds to conquer, only to fall within ten days a victim to his own untamed passions, so Napoleon was able to establish new empires throughout Europe—everywhere, save in the kingdom of his own home, the one place where defeat is disastrous and irreparable. That broken harp in the chamber of Josephine in Malmaison sounds with superlative irony a warning to the world today against the tragedy of a broken home, for which no other victories over men or nations can ever compensate. It reminds mankind that the building of a stable home, where peace and love abound, is man's supreme achievement and the source of his deepest and most abiding happiness. If a man fail in business, politics, or other enterprises, but has kept intact the empire of his own home, with the myriad ties of sympathy and understanding unbroken, his failure is overshadowed by a victory which soothes the sting of uncounted defeats and brings the richest returns in love and happiness.

#### *Home—The Foundation*

From the watchtower of the Vatican hill, surveying the struggles of humanity groping wistfully for new trails to happiness, with sentinels bringing their reports from the far corners of the earth, the great White Shepherd of Christen-

dom sounds a similar warning. In his Encyclical on *Christian Marriage*, Pope Pius XI calls attention to the supreme importance of the unity and indissolubility of Christian wedlock and lays bare the forces undermining the sanctity of the home. The home is the foundation of human society. Undermine the home, the Holy Father points out, and you blast at the solid bedrock upon which society and stable government alike are builded. No expedient devised by the sociologist or the political scientist constitutes so mighty a bulwark for the protection of human society and orderly government as the teaching of Christ's Church concerning the sanctity of the marriage vow, the indissolubility of its bond, and the permanence of the Christian home.

The mother has been constituted by God as the first and the most effective teacher of her children. Receiving his life and nutriment from his mother, the little child drinks in with equal eagerness the lessons he learns at his mother's knee. Like soft wax the mind of a child receives impressions with ease. It is these first impressions which sink the deepest and remain the longest. Indeed, experts in genetic psychology now assure us that impressions received during early childhood and in the preadolescent stage set up mental patterns and codes of conduct in the light of which all the experiences of later life are interpreted and evaluated.

They are the ideals imbedded in the plastic days of childhood which the later years but deepen and harden—the ideals which consciously or unconsciously the adult carries with him to the grave. While the psychologist has given a description of this phenomenon in new and scientific terms, it is a truth which has long been recognized. Thus the writer in the Book of Proverbs stated it thousands of years ago when he said: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."<sup>1</sup>

#### *The Primeval School*

Since the mother is the first and the most effective teacher, the home is the primeval and the most important school. Children who are fed by their own mothers are usually more robust and vigorous than those nurtured by others, or raised on the bottle. Likewise children who are

instructed in the precepts of morality and the teachings of religion by their own mothers are generally sturdier in their faith than those tutored by strangers. The child loves his mother and trusts in her as in no one else in the world. The lessons he learns from her are received with implicit confidence and unquestioning faith.

That is why no lay teacher, indeed not even a sister or priest, can ever be an adequate substitute for the mother as a teacher. That is why no Sunday school, nor even a parochial school with its week day instruction by devoted sisters, can ever be a proper substitute for the home as a training school for the young. The most that these persons and agencies can do is to *supplement* the work of the mother in her home. If the training is neglected by the mother, then no human agency is capable of repairing the loss. It is final and irreparable.

As this point is crucial, let us illustrate it by the following analogy. An adult's physical constitution and vigor are largely determined by the nurture, care and training received during his early childhood and youth. Let us take the case of a little child who was deprived of the nourishment required for the formation and growth of the bony structure of his body. His parents fail to give him this needed nourishment. Suffering from such malnutrition, the bones become soft and ill-shaped, unable to support properly the weight and movement of the different parts of the body.

Take that young man thus deformed to the greatest clinics, supply him with the ablest specialists in the world, back him with the resources of Rockefeller. But you will strive in vain to recover the heritage of his lost youth. There was a time when doctors, care and nutriment could have helped him. That was the crucial period when his bones were forming, when nature was building once and for aye the permanent framework of the human body. That time, however, has passed. The bones are set, unshapely and deformed. No human power can remold them. No resources of men or money can ever recover for him his lost heritage.

#### *A Lost Heritage*

So it is with a child's moral and spiritual heritage. If the home fails to provide a child with proper training in these matters, teachers, sisters, priests, the school and the

Church will strive in vain to undo the bad example of the home or even to overcome its negligence and thus recover for him his lost heritage. The home is the ideal training school not only because the mother is the ideal teacher but also because example is a more powerful teacher than precept. It is the example of the parents, their actions, words, attitudes, that form the atmosphere of the home which the child drinks in with his every breath. These are the influences which fashion him and make him responsive or unresponsive to the ideals proclaimed by Church and school.

There are probably few sisters or priests who have spent many years in the education of youth who have not had the conviction of the crucial and supreme importance of the training received at home driven deep into them. Thus a priest who has been for many years a chaplain at a sisters' academy for girls recently expressed the results of his long experience. "While attending the academy," he states, "the girls attend Mass not only on Sunday but on every week day as well. They say night prayers together in the chapel. They receive religious instruction five days a week. They are apparently well indoctrinated in the faith. In addition they have the edifying example of the good sisters."

"In June they return home. A considerable number come from homes where the mother is dead, or divorced, or where the parents are lax in their faith. Upon their return to school in the fall, I inquire of these girls about the practice of their religion while at home. I find that a large proportion of such girls fall back into the carelessness and laxity which characterize the home, and which seem to have become a part of their nature before they entered the convent school. Once they are back in the atmosphere of a careless home, the veneer of religious deportment which characterized them while under the sisters' charge seems speedily to be eaten away by the acids of parental indifference and neglect of religious duties. It has been most disheartening and has led me to the conviction that the school can seldom, if ever, undo the result of defective home training."

#### *Home Outweighs School*

The experience of my priestly associates and myself in laboring for almost twenty-five years among the Catholic



youth at a State University has deepened in all of us this conviction: The religious training received at home, at the hands of parents vigorous and fervent in their faith, is the most important and lasting of all. It will outweigh the influence of the parochial grade school, high school, college or university—and indeed of all of them combined. The faith thoroughly planted in the child by careful home training will withstand a thousand frosts and all the winds that blow. While at times such an individual may not be able to put in words the refutation of sophistries attacking his holy religion, he knows with a deep and ineradicable conviction, with a sort of divine intuition, that they are fallacies. The knowledge of the influence of his holy religion in developing the nobility of character in his father and mother tells him, with a cogency and an eloquence that admit of no dispute, that the sophist lies. Example speaks louder than words and remains today, as it always has been, the sculptor of character and of lasting convictions. The most deadly, if not almost the only real danger to the Christian faith is a bad moral life.

My associate, the Very Reverend Dr. William J. Bergin, C. S. V., has spent half a century in the work of Catholic education. As a brother, he taught in the grades; as a priest, he has taught in the high school, college, seminary and university. Thousands of laymen, and hundreds of priests, many of whom are now prelates and bishops, have sat at his feet. He expresses the conviction engendered by a long and fruitful ministry when he says: "The note that needs most to be sounded in America today is the one that stresses the supreme and paramount importance of religious training in the home. I do not hesitate to say that the influence of the home in the fashioning of character and in rooting religious faith in the children is more crucial than that of Church or school. Parents must be brought to realize that they are bound by a divine law to teach and train their offspring in their holy religion. Sisters and priests in school and Church can only water the seed which parents themselves must sow. The work of our schools from kindergarten to the University, the work of our Catholic press, the work of the Church itself will be largely frustrated if Catholic parents neglect on

any pretext whatsoever to train their children in the knowledge and in the practice of the religion of Jesus Christ."

### *The Home at Nazareth*

The home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph at Nazareth is the model for all Christians. Though the Son of God, Jesus did not hesitate as a child to manifest filial obedience and reverence to His mother and His foster-father, Joseph. The Scriptures reveal this in the one brief sentence: "He was subject to them."<sup>1</sup> Thus did the divine Master set an example for youth everywhere. On their part, Mary and Joseph displayed the deepest love and solicitude for their divine Son.

To all parents there is entrusted a mission hardly less honorable than that assigned Joseph and Mary. It is the sublime mission of fashioning youthful minds and hearts according to the divine model. Parents become for the moment co-sharers with Almighty God in the sublime work of creation, in bringing into existence a human being. Their offspring have been made unto the image of God. They have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ and are destined for an eternity of happiness with God in Heaven. Parents have a divinely appointed task of guiding their groping footsteps safely along the paths of virtue and nobility of life. Whether they will be angels of light and lead their offspring to the life eternal, or be messengers of darkness who lead them away from God is for parents to decide. Upon their decision hinge consequences that reach into eternity.

History records many instances of the influence of a saintly mother in shaping the character of her children into the image of her own sanctity. When St. Augustine as a youth left his home in Tagaste and went to Carthage he succumbed to the temptations in which that city abounded. Losing his purity of conscience, he lost likewise the integrity of his faith, becoming tainted with Manichaeism, a widespread heresy of that day. His saintly mother, Monica, never despaired. With the constancy of a true mother she stormed Heaven with her prayers for her wayward son.

"The child of so many prayers and tears," prophesied a holy bishop, "will not be lost." In the midst of his profligate

<sup>1</sup>Luke 2:51.

life, the memory of his saintly mother came back to him. It called him back from the sin and error of his ways. Before her death St. Monica had the consolation of seeing her son restored to God and His Church. In his matchless book, *The Confessions*, St. Augustine attributes his conversion to the influence of his saintly mother's life and to her ceaseless prayers for him, and speaks of her with a wistful tenderness that for fifteen centuries has stirred the hearts of men.

### *St. Louis of France*

St. Louis, one of the noblest of all the kings of France, is another shining example of the influence of a holy mother. The virtues which made him so beloved by his people, and rendered his reign so illustrious in the annals of France, he attributed, under God, to his saintly mother, Queen Blanche. Typical of the care with which she guided his youthful feet along the paths of virtue and holiness are the memorable words she addressed to him as a child: "I love you tenderly, but sooner would I see you a corpse at my feet, and France bereft of an heir to the throne, than have you commit one mortal sin." If Queen Blanche, in spite of the engrossing duties of state, could pay so much attention to the religious training of her son, surely the mothers of today in the private walks of life can do as much. Though their sons may not ascend the thrones of kings, they can ascend the thrones of high citizenship, honest and faithful in the discharge of all its manifold duties. There is more truth than poetry in the oft-quoted saying: "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world."

Frederick Shannon has given us a deeper insight into the far-reaching role which mothers play in the fashioning of human life and character. "No blocks of marble," he says, "do they round into statues; no canvasses do they adorn with glowing colors; no books do they write with scholarly taste; no music do they compose with sweet strains; no platforms do they occupy with persuasive speech. Yet they are all these, and more, because they are God's disciples of the unexplored and the unexpressed. Sculptors, they chisel the veined marble of flesh and blood into living, breathing, human statues; artists, they paint the colors of righteousness on undying souls; authors, they write the literature of godliness on the hearts

of their sons; musicians, they sing the white song of chastity into the souls of their daughters; orators, their lives speak so eloquently of the invisible things of God, that, after quitting the world, they being dead, speak on from the high places of eternity."

It was this same thought which St. John Chrysostom expressed fifteen centuries ago when he said: "What is more noble than to form the minds of youth? He who fashions the morals of children performs a task in my judgment more sublime than that of any painter or sculptor."

### *A Son's Accusation*

While history records many cases of men and women whose nobility of character was traceable to home influences, it is likewise replete with instances of tragic failures traceable to the neglect of parental duty. In a recent address to college graduates Bishop Sheil of Chicago stressed the importance of the home as a training school for citizenship. As an illustration of the tragic consequences of parental negligence, he narrated the following incident:

"When I was a young priest," he said, "I ministered to the religious needs of the prisoners at the county jail in Chicago. Early one wintry morning I was called to accompany a young prisoner, twenty-three years of age, on his death march to the gallows. He had committed a large number of robberies that culminated in the murder of a policeman who sought to apprehend him. Just before the noose was to be placed around his neck, he was asked if he had any final word to say. Looking around the death chamber, he spied a little group of people, the members of his family and a few other relatives who had come to witness the execution. Pointing his finger at his father, he cried out: 'I am about to hang because that man, my own father, failed to do his duty. He allowed me to run with hoodlums and gangsters all hours of the day and night. He never warned me against their ways, never told me where it would lead to. Now I die in disgrace upon these gallows, because my father neglected to do his duty. He, rather than I, should have this noose placed around his neck. For he is the real criminal.'"

What a terrible accusation to have leveled against a

father by his own son! How it must have stung him like a red hot iron. Would life ever be long enough to wash out the memory of that dying cry? Only death could do that. But could it? Would not that accusing finger be pointed at him again, when he stood before the judgment seat of Almighty God to give an account of his stewardship? Perhaps there are more terrible tragedies that can occur in the lives of parents. But the writer can think of none.

#### *A Responsible Stewardship*

When the daughter of Pharaoh found the infant Moses among the bulrushes along the banks of the Nile she placed the child in the custody of the mother, saying in effect: "Take this child and nurse him *for me*: I will give thee thy wages."<sup>1</sup> (*italics mine*). It is substantially these words which Almighty God whispers in the ears of parents when He gives to them a little angel in human flesh. They are not absolute sovereigns, free to do with that child whatsoever they wish. They are but the stewards, appointed by God to care for that child, to train it to nobility and holiness of life. A strict account of their stewardship will be demanded from them as they stand before the judgment seat of the Most High.

What will be their consternation if, at that dread moment, they find the accusing fingers of their children pointing to them as the real culprits, responsible because of their parental neglect for the disasters that befell their children? The Apostle Paul warned such parents of the fate in store for them when he said: "If any one have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."<sup>2</sup> What will be their joy, if, on the contrary, they find the hands of their children stretched down from on high in prayer and thanksgiving for the noble example, the wise counsel, the painstaking care, which prompted them to lead just and upright lives and to be numbered now among God's elect? St. John foretold their reward when he said: "They that instruct many unto justice shall shine as the stars for all eternity."<sup>3</sup> Theirs shall be the reward that comes to those who have achieved

<sup>1</sup>Exodus 2:9.

<sup>2</sup>1 Tim. 5:8.

<sup>3</sup>Daniel 12:12.

the supreme duty of parents, the building of a noble home, the fashioning of children after the likeness of Christ, the guiding of their groping footsteps along the path that leads unerringly to life everlasting.

If parents are to fulfill their great mission in life, they must build a home where peace and love abide. They must exclude from this sacred domain every semblance of anger, quarrelsomeness and ill-temper. Nothing mars so quickly the beauty of a home as the intrusion of these outcroppings of our lower nature. Home should be a little bit of Heaven upon earth, a refuge from the strife and hardship of the world, where husband and wife can always find sympathy, encouragement, inspiration. If instead of finding in the home relief from the strife and worry of life's daily grind, they find only an intensification of that spirit, then the home is robbed of its beauty and loveliness. Instead of an earthly paradise, a little bit of Heaven, it becomes a purgatory, if not a hell on earth. Stark tragedy squats brooding at that fire-side.

#### *Guarding the Entrance*

The spirit of strife usually gains entrance through the hasty, ill-tempered word. A young married couple immediately after the marriage ceremony should promise each other that, no matter what provocation may arise, they will never speak to one another in a harsh, angry manner. Difficulties may and indeed will arise. But they can always be discussed in a kindly considerate manner. There is neither rhyme nor reason in two people shouting angrily at each other when the matter could be solved, and indeed must ultimately be solved, by talking it over in a considerate and friendly way.

A pastor who has ministered to young people for many years, and who has studied with much care the factors disturbing the stability of the home, reports the following conclusion to which his study and observation have led him: Practically every young couple who marry intend to be kind and considerate to one another. When the glamour of their honeymoon yields to life's work-a-day world, however, they begin to be conscious of little mannerisms or actions of the other person which irk them. Almost before they realize it,



they have uttered a critical, sharp word which wounds the feelings. One word leads to another. A quarrel ensues. The virginal beauty of their relationship is tarnished. The illusions upon which love thrives are dispelled. The idol is found to have feet of clay. They are just two ordinary humans now, instead of that glamorous ideal, that unique something that they were before.

The tendency to quarrel is likely to become chronic if not nipped in the bud. If it persists, the young couple will have succeeded in destroying the most beautiful and delicate flower in human life—the sweet tender flower of conjugal love. With a view of forewarning young people of this danger, I have made it a practice for almost twenty years, to take the bride and groom aside immediately after the wedding ceremony, I explain to them how much it will mean for their happiness if they keep their love unsullied by harsh, angry, bitter words. I suggest they promise one another with a seriousness second only to that of their conjugal vow, that they will never under any circumstances utter an ill-tempered, cutting word to each other. I have never had a couple refuse to do so. I have had many tell me later on what a valuable safeguard it was for the unbroken peace and happiness of their home. It is a promise which every young couple might well make on their wedding day, and keep with the same fidelity with which they observe their conjugal vow.

#### *Mutual Sacrifice*

The necessity of mutual sacrifice for the preservation of conjugal happiness is stated with beauty and impressiveness in the instruction which the Ritual prescribes to be read to the young couple. "It is most fitting," says the Ritual, "that you rest the security of your wedded life upon the great principle of self-sacrifice. And so you begin your married life by the voluntary and complete surrender of your individual lives in the interest of that deeper and wider life which you are to have in common. Henceforth you will belong entirely to each other; you will be one in mind, one in heart, and one in affections. And whatever sacrifices you may hereafter be required to make to preserve this common life, always make them generously. Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome. Only love can make it easy; and perfect

love can make it a joy. We are willing to give in proportion as we love. . . .

"No greater blessing can come to your married life than pure conjugal love, loyal and true to the end. May, then, this love with which you join your hands and hearts today, never fail, but grow deeper and stronger as the years go on. And if true love and the unselfish spirit of perfect sacrifice guide your every action, you can expect the greatest measure of earthly happiness that may be allotted to man in this vale of tears. The rest is in the hands of God. Nor will God be wanting to your needs; He will pledge you the lifelong support of His graces in the Holy Sacrament which you are now going to receive."

Robert Montgomery has drawn a beautiful analogy between the brightness of the North Star which, astronomers tell us, reflects the brilliance of two stars so close together that their light merges and appears as that from a single star, and the unity and constancy which should characterize a married couple.

"The cynosure of northern skies  
Appears but one to seamen's eyes,  
Yet twain there are,  
And each a star—  
Perhaps a sun.

"May you, my friends, reverse the view,  
And while on earth you look like two,  
From Heaven to be seen as one;  
Yea, like that polar symbol be  
A double star of constancy."

#### *A Mighty Bulwark*

When that indomitable soldier, acclaimed by many to be the greatest military genius ever born on this side of the Atlantic, Stonewall Jackson, lay dead on the battlefield at Chancellorsville, one of his devoted officers, bending low over the lifeless corpse, touched the cold hand, and said: "If you meet with Caesar tonight, tell him we still make war." We, who are members of that goodly company which for nineteen centuries has fought in every land under the banner

of the gentle Christ, proclaim to the world that we "still make war" against all the forces that would undermine the sanctity of the home, and the integrity of the family life. May we not ask our fellow citizens of every faith to join with us in fighting for the permanence of the home, the sacredness of conjugal love, and the sanctity of the family fireside around which are enshrined the noblest traditions of our American life? In thus struggling for the preservation of the institutions of the home and the family in all the beauty of their unity and integrity, we are struggling for the maintenance of the mightiest bulwark for the preservation of the America we love so much.

### Discussion Aids

What does Pope Pius, XI in his encyclical on *Christian Marriage*, say of the Christian home? Who is the first and most effective teacher of children? Discuss the influence of impressions received in early childhood. If the mother is the first teacher, what is the first school? Are any agencies outside the home adequate substitute teachers? What is the function of such agencies? Where *must* the child receive the basic religious and moral training? What must be the character of the home to make that training effective? What is the model home for all Christians? Compare the mission of all parents with that of Mary and Joseph. Name a few examples of the influence of saintly mothers. Comment on the duty of parents to create and maintain an atmosphere of peace and love in the home and on the necessity of mutual sacrifice.

### Practices:

Take seriously your God-imposed duty of training your children in religion and morality in the home.

Help to organize a parent-educator discussion club in your parish.

Try to rid yourself of the faults that keep your home from being a model home.

## PART V

### THE MASS AND OTHER DEVOTIONS

#### An Exposition of the Prayer Life of the Church

## Chapter XXIX

### THE MASS AND OTHER DEVOTIONS

#### *An Exposition of the Prayer Life of the Church*

Sacrifice is the offering to God of some tangible object, with the destruction of the object, to acknowledge God's dominion over life and death. The custom of offering sacrifice is as old as humanity. When the curtain is first raised upon the human scene, we find the children of Adam offering oblation to the Most High. Abel offered the firstlings of his flock, while Cain offered of the fruits of the earth. The first act of Noe upon issuing from the ark, which had enabled himself and his family to escape from the deluge, was to offer holocausts to the Almighty in thanksgiving for his preservation. It was the custom of the Jewish priests to offer each day two lambs as a sacrifice to God, thus prefiguring the great sacrifice of the New Law in which is daily offered on the altar "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world."

The sacrifices of the Old Law served as a preparation and a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of the New Law. When this latter sacrifice was instituted, the former immolations were to cease. The old sacrifices were to be succeeded by a clean victim which would be offered not alone in Jerusalem but in every part of the world. God spoke to the Jews through the mouth of the prophet Malachy: "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For, from the rising of the sun, even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation, for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts."<sup>1</sup> These prophetic words have received their fulfillment in the sacrifice of the Mass in which Christ is offered up in every country of the world as the clean victim for the sins of mankind.

<sup>1</sup>Mal. 1:10, 11.



The Mass is the unbloody reenactment of the sacrifice of Calvary. Through the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the Mass perpetuates the sacrifice of the Cross by offering to God the same Victim that was immolated on Calvary for the redemption of man. In the Mass the priest speaks not in his own name, but as the ambassador of Jesus Christ, speaking the very words which Christ uttered at the Last Supper. Thus Jesus Christ is both the High priest and the Victim in the sacrifice of the Mass and in the sacrifice of the Cross, and the ends for which both sacrifices were offered are the same.

The manner in which the sacrifices are offered is alone different. In the Cross Christ really shed His blood and was really slain. In the Mass, however, there is no real shedding of blood, no real death. But the separate consecration of the bread and of the wine symbolizes the separation of the body and blood of Christ and thus symbolizes His death upon the Cross. The Mass is the renewal and perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross in the sense that it offers anew to God the Victim of Calvary and thus commemorates the sacrifice of the Cross, re-enacts it symbolically and mystically, and applies the fruits of Christ's death upon the Cross to individual human souls. All the efficacy of the Mass is derived, therefore, from the sacrifice of Calvary.

#### *Instituted at Last Supper*

Christ instituted the Mass at the Last Supper on the night before He died. St. Matthew thus records the institution: "And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke; and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is my body. And taking the chalice, he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins."<sup>1</sup>

Christ commanded the Apostles to re-enact this Eucharistic Sacrifice when He said to them after the consecration: "Do ye this for a commemoration of me."<sup>2</sup>

In compliance with the command of Christ, the adorable sacrifice of the Mass has been daily re-enacted in all our

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 26:26-29.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 22:19.

churches from the days of the Apostles to the present time, and will be continued until the consummation of the world. Tradition with its myriad tongues proclaims the universal custom of the early Christians of offering up the *Holy Mysteries*, as they called the Eucharistic Sacrifice in those days. Seeking refuge from the persecutions of imperial Rome, the Christians went into the dark catacombs and there over the tombs of martyrs, their spiritual shepherds re-enacted the Eucharistic Sacrifice while the faithful joined in the prayers and in the singing of hymns. St. Justin Martyr (160) bears witness to the Apostolic faith when he writes: "The oblation of the flour, which was commanded to be offered up for those cleansed from leprosy was a type of the Bread of the Eucharist, which Jesus Christ commanded us to celebrate. . . Concerning those Sacrifices which are offered to Him in every place by us Gentiles, that is, the Bread of the Eucharist, and similarly the Cup of the Eucharist."<sup>1</sup>

Tertullian (160-220) thus testifies to the widespread practice of offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the second century. He writes: "Will not your fast be more solemn, if you stand at the altar of God? When you receive the body of the Lord, you place in security both the participation in the Sacrifice and the fulfillment of duty."<sup>2</sup>

Writing in the third century, St. Cyprian sets forth the Catholic doctrine on the Mass as clearly as a theologian of the twentieth. He teaches that the Eucharist contains an immolated Victim and is a true and complete sacrifice; that it was instituted by Christ, and is a commemoration of His passion, and is even identical with that Passion. . . "Christ," he writes, "is the Teacher and Founder of this Sacrifice. . . Who is more a priest than Jesus Christ, who offered a Sacrifice to God the Father, and offered the very same thing which Melchisedech offered, that is, bread and wine, namely His Body and Blood. . . For if Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, is Himself the Chief Priest of God the Father, and has first offered Himself a Sacrifice to the Father, and has commanded this to be done in commemoration of Himself, surely that priest discharges the office of Christ who imitates what Christ did; and he then offers a true and full Sacrifice to

<sup>1</sup>Dial. Cum. Tryph. 41.

<sup>2</sup>De Oratione, 18.

God the Father in the Church, when he proceeds to offer it according to the manner in which he sees Christ to have offered. . . . Because we make mention of the Passion in all Sacrifices (for the Lord's Passion is the Sacrifice which we offer), we ought to do nothing else but what He did. For the Sacred Scriptures say, as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye show forth the Lord's death until He come."<sup>1</sup>

At the Last Supper Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist which is both a sacrament and a sacrifice. As a sacrament its primary purpose is to sanctify our souls, while as a sacrifice its primary purpose is to offer homage and worship to Almighty God. As the sacrament of Holy Communion it is the perpetuation of the Last Supper, while as the sacrifice of the Mass it is the perpetuation of the sacrifice of Calvary.

#### *Heart of Catholic Worship*

The sacrifice of the Mass is offered up for the same ends for which Christ died on the Cross, namely, to propitiate Almighty God for the sins of man, to render homage, praise and thanksgiving for His benefits, and to supplicate Him for graces and blessings. We should therefore assist at Mass with the same devotion with which we would have knelt at the foot of the Cross and have offered up the dying Christ as the Victim for the sins of the world. For Christ is offered up on the altar as truly as He was offered up on Calvary's Cross. The Mass is more valuable than any prayer. It is the supreme offering which the creature is able to return to the Creator. As Thomas a Kempis well says: "When a priest celebrates Mass he honors God, he rejoices the angels, he edifies the Church, he helps the living, he obtains rest for the dead, and makes himself a partaker of all that is good."

The Mass is the very heart of Catholic worship. Just as the heart pumps the life giving blood to every member of the body, vitalizing and nourishing it, so the Mass radiates its abundant graces and merits to all the subordinate devotions of the Church, enriching and invigorating them with its own might and power. As the planets cluster around the sun, from which they receive their light and heat, so do all the various types of prayer and ritual cluster around the sacrifice of the Mass. It is the central act of worship in the Catholic

<sup>1</sup>Epis. 63.

Church and no other devotion can compare with it in spiritual richness and efficacy.

"For sheer beauty, dignity, and sublimity", says Father J. M. Cooper, "there is naught in the whole realm of religious literature that can compare with the prayers of the Mass as the outpouring of the human heart's deepest reverence and purest love and warmest pleading to the Father of us all. In their sustained majesty and in their august simplicity they are a worthy setting for the supreme act of Christian worship. And they are the more venerable and beloved by us in that for nearly a millennium and a half they have been consecrated by the untold millions who in all ages and climes and races have professed faith in and loyalty to the Eucharistic Christ."<sup>1</sup>

The Council of Trent thus summarizes the Church's teaching concerning the Mass:

1. There is in the Catholic Church a true Sacrifice, instituted by Jesus Christ—the Sacrifice of His Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine.

2. This Sacrifice is identical with the Sacrifice of the Cross, inasmuch as Jesus Christ is Priest and Victim in both; the only difference lies in the manner of offering, which is bloody upon the Cross and bloodless on our altars.

3. It is a propitiatory Sacrifice, atoning for our sins, and the sins of the living and of the dead in Christ, for whom it is offered.

4. Its efficacy is derived from the Sacrifice of the Cross, whose infinite merits it applies to us.

5. Although offered to God alone, it may be celebrated in honor and memory of the saints.

6. The Mass was instituted at the Last Supper when Christ, about to offer Himself on the altar of the Cross by His death for our redemption wished to endow His Church with a visible Sacrifice, commemorative of His Bloody Sacrifice of the Cross. As High Priest, according to the order of Melchisedech He offered to His Father His own Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine, and constituted His Apostles priests of the New Testament to renew

<sup>1</sup>Cooper, *Religion Outlines for Colleges*, vol. 2, p. 189.

this same offering until He came again by the words, "Do this in commemoration of me."<sup>1</sup>

### *An Eloquent Sacrifice*

In the Mass Jesus pleads our cause and becomes our advocate before the throne of the Eternal Father: "If any man sin," says St. John, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."<sup>2</sup> Reflecting this truth the celebrant recites at the offertory of the Mass the following prayer: "Receive, O holy Father, almighty, eternal God, this immaculate victim which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer to Thee, my living and true God, for my innumerable sins, offences and negligences, for all here present, and for all the faithful living and dead, that it may avail me and them to life everlasting."<sup>3</sup>

The sacrifice of the Mass is the most effective form of supplication which we humans can offer to the Eternal Father. "For, if the blood of goats and oxen," says St. Paul "and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, by the Holy Ghost, offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"<sup>4</sup> If the prayers of Moses and David were so powerful in behalf of God's children, how much more powerful must be the intercession of our Advocate, Jesus Christ?

If the sufferings of the martyrs plead so eloquently for us, how much more eloquent must be the blood of Christ that is shed daily for us upon our altars? What legion of saints and angels can intercede for us before the throne of God so effectively as the divine Son who humbled himself even to the death of the Cross? Verily the Mass is a "throne of grace" to which we should go with confidence, "that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid."<sup>5</sup> It is the most priceless of all the treasures which have come to us from the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

<sup>1</sup>Sess. 22.

<sup>2</sup>1 John 2:1, 2.

<sup>3</sup>Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 818.

<sup>4</sup>Heb. 9:13, 14.

<sup>5</sup>Heb. 4:16.

### Discussion Aids

What is sacrifice? Give a short history of sacrifice in the Old Testament. What Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled in the Sacrifice of the New Law? What is the Mass? Explain how it is the renewal and perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross. When was the Mass instituted? Quote St. Matthew's text on the institution of the Mass; St. Luke's text. Trace the history of the Mass briefly to the present day. What are the four ends of the Mass? How does the Council of Trent summarize the teaching on the Mass? Explain how the Mass is the center of Catholic worship and the most effective form of supplication.

### *Practices:*

• Include the Mass in your morning offering.

Use the Missal when assisting at Mass.

Try to increase your appreciation of this great Sacrifice by occasional meditation.



## Chapter XXX

### THE LITURGY OF THE MASS

*Through It the Whole Man Is United in Worship of His God*

It is one of the characteristics of the Catholic Church which visitors at her services have often observed, that she does not speak to the faithful in words alone. She appeals to them through the glorious melodies of music which uplift the soul, through hymns and songs and chants. Through the subtle play of lights and shadows, and the mingled colors of the rainbow imprisoned upon the artist's canvas, not less than through the plastic beauty of the sculptured statue, does she render her message articulate. Especially does she appeal to them through the stately moving ceremonial of her worship which speaks directly to the eye. In myriad tongues she speaks and in the universal language of gesture and sign and pageantry. The untutored peasant and the erudite savant find themselves alike at home in her temple. No race or tribe is alien to the Esperanto of her liturgy. Pressing into her service all the senses as so many gateways to the soul, she enlists the whole man, mind and heart and soul in the worship of his God.

Visitors to her devotions who have been totally unaccustomed to any liturgical display in their own services, do not always understand, however, the significance of the religious ceremonies they witness nor the important role they play in the enrichment of the individual's spiritual life.

Accustomed to seeing only a pulpit within the four bare walls of a church, stripped of altar, statuary, paintings, flowers, lighted candles, and to a service devoid of the slightest touch of pageantry, they are naturally somewhat bewildered at the profusion of ceremony in Catholic devotions, especially in that central act of Catholic worship, the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Besides those of our separated brethren who express simply their lack of understanding of the meaning of the Church's liturgy, there are those who assert that the lavish use of such ceremonies distracts the worshipper from his primary purpose—the worship of God.

Let us investigate then the function of ceremonies in religious worship to ascertain if there be a valid basis both in philosophy and in psychology for their employment in acts of worship.

#### *The Philosophical Basis of Ceremonies*

The philosophical basis is to be found in the twofold nature, psychical and physical, with which the Creator has endowed mankind. As a consequence of this, as St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>1</sup> points out, man must render to God a twofold worship which reflects his dual nature. The one, a spiritual adoration, consists in the interior devotion of the soul and implies the conscious recognition of God's supreme dominion over man, and his complete dependence upon Him. The other, a corporal worship, consists in the external acknowledgement through the agency of the bodily members of the Creator's sovereignty over man. While great emphasis may rightly be placed upon the interior dispositions of the soul, such as love and reverence, without which exterior worship would be so much meaningless rigmarole, yet it is folly to overlook the importance from the viewpoint of both religion and psychology of the participation of the physical members in the rendering of such conjoint worship.

The two natures of man are so closely knit together into an organic whole that every inward sentiment or feeling seeks to register its presence through some appropriate movement or posture of the body. The constant inhibition of such external expression of the internal sentiments of homage, love, and reverence not only robs the act of worship of its important physical components but tends to strangle and ultimately to eradicate completely the sentiments themselves.

"Worship mostly of the silent sort," as Rickaby<sup>2</sup> has observed, "worship that finds no expression in word or gesture—worship away from pealing organs and chants of praise, or the simpler music of the human voice, where no hands are uplifted, nor tongue loosened, nor posture of reverence assumed, becomes with most mortals a vague, aimless reverie, a course of distraction and dreaminess and vacancy of mind."

<sup>1</sup>Contra Gentiles, III, CXIX.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Rickaby, Moral Philosophy, p. 192.

Entirely aside, however, from the psychical reverberation of the physical expression of emotions, it is sufficient to point out here in the discussion of the philosophical basis of ceremonies that man cannot withhold that bodily manifestation of worship without depriving the Creator of a form of adoration to which He is entitled in strict justice. For the body is indebted both for its existence and for its capacity for movement, to the creative power of Almighty God. Therefore reason demands that the body participate in rendering worship to the Creator in express acknowledgement of a relationship rooted in the very laws of nature, namely, a relationship of absolute sovereignty on the part of the Creator and of complete and total dependence on the part of the physical nature of man. True, the body cannot render homage to God, independently of its vivifying principle. But it can act conjointly with the soul and contribute in a subordinate but important manner to such conjoint worship. "Man must pay tithe to God," says Otten<sup>1</sup>, "for soul and body by offering Him the love of the one and the obeisance of the other." That is why St. Thomas Aquinas maintained that religious ceremonies in acts of worship are not only appropriate concomitants but that they are inevitable corollaries flowing from the composite psychophysical nature with which the Creator has endowed man. In that inspired treatise which penetrates at times into such dizzy heights that human reason falters behind, St. John points to the above-mentioned creative act as the fundamental reason underlying all religious worship. "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were, and have been created."<sup>2</sup>

The folded hands, the bowed head, the bent knee are so many efforts on the part of man's physical nature to share with the psychical principle in the articulate acknowledgment of God's sovereign dominion over all creatures. The hymns of praise and words of prayer that rise as sweet incense from the hearts of His children to the throne of God in heaven, are they not acceptable and pleasing to our heavenly Father? Ask the human father if the fond caress of his little

<sup>1</sup>Bernard J. Otten, *The Reason Why*, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Apocalypse, 4:11.

child who runs with outstretched arms and eager feet to greet him upon his return at evening from the day's toil means anything to him. Ask him if the light of love that glows in those eyes and the tender play of those angel hands about the wrinkles in his toil-worn countenance, are so much folderol, void and meaningless. Why they are the very breath of his nostrils, the manna for his hungry heart.

Yet that throbbing heart of his, aglow with happiness at the manifestation of his child's love and reverence, is but the image of God's own loving heart. It too throbs in happiness at the outpouring of His children's love and homage. He has not created His children only to set them adrift on life's ocean, with no solicitude for their welfare and happiness. He has fashioned their hearts after the likeness of His own, and has given to them the power of communicating with Him, of coming to Him with their petitions and their love, even as they come to their own earthly fathers. His paternal heart rejoices at the outpourings of His children's love and praise, and is saddened by their indifference and neglect. That is why the performance of external acts of adoration, praise, and homage in which both mind and body participate, constitute the very essence of religious worship. That is the manner in which man renders a full measure of homage to Almighty God, to Whom St. John tells us, is due, "benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honor and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever."<sup>1</sup> Such is the fundamental philosophical basis for external homage and for the use of ceremonies in religious worship.

#### *The Psychological Basis of Ceremonies*

Entirely aside from the philosophical propriety of such external worship, is there a sound psychological foundation for the employment of ceremonies in religious worship? In other words, even if worship be regarded as consisting essentially of the internal sentiments of reverence, love, and adoration, flowing from the mind and heart, would there not still be a justification for the utilization of corporal movements both for the excitation and preservation of these internal sentiments and mental attitudes? The findings of modern psychology demonstrate abundantly that bodily participation

<sup>1</sup>Apoc. 7:12.

in religious worship is not only helpful in arousing the appropriate mental states but serves to strengthen and intensify the aroused religious feelings. The inhibition of all bodily movement expressive of such sentiments, serves on the other hand to render exceedingly difficult the evocation of the internal sentiments, to minimize their vigor and to strangle and atrophy them. There is consequently a sound basis in modern psychology for the use of ceremonies in religious worship.

The basis is to be found in the fundamental law of the psychophysical relationship, namely, the law that mind and body exercise a reciprocal or mutually interactive influence on each other. There is no movement of a bodily member above the automatic or reflex stage that does not produce its corresponding mental correlate. Similarly, there is no internal sentiment or feeling that does not seek to find appropriate expression through some physical channel. There is no psychosis, modern psychology affirms, without its corresponding neurosis. The psychical principle, the soul, in some inscrutable manner acts upon the body and it in turn is affected by the physical organism.

This fact finds abundant recognition in the ceremonies of that great religious drama in the Catholic Church, the central act of her worship, the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is the continuation of the sacrifice begun at the Last Supper and completed on the Cross at Calvary. It is therefore the renewal in an unbloody manner of the sacrifice of Christ on Golgotha. It combines in itself the four great elements of religious worship, namely, adoration, propitiation, thanksgiving and supplication. Not only the celebrant but the faithful as well assist at this sublime sacrifice with the deepest sentiments of faith and devotion.

At the beginning of Mass, the visitor will note that the celebrant while still at the foot of the altar recites the *Confiteor*. This prayer is a confession of one's unworthiness, calling upon the members of the heavenly court to witness the acknowledgment that "I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." The priest recites it in his own behalf as an act of profound humility and of his unworthiness to perform so sublime a function. The acolyte

repeats it in behalf of the congregation. Note the posture assumed by the celebrant while making this act of humility. His erect posture changes instantly. He bows profoundly with his face to the ground and remains thus during the recitation of the entire prayer. When in acknowledging the fact that he has sinned, he utters the words, "through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault," he strikes his breast with his closed hand in additional external manifestation of his culpability.

Note how the physical posture thus assumed is well adapted to induce the corresponding mental attitude, a consciousness of one's unworthiness. The bent body, the face turned toward the ground, the downcast eyes, the striking of the breast, serve as so many powerful physical stimuli in arousing the desired psychical attitude of humility. The assumption of an upright posture, with head erect, eyes uplifted to the skies, and chest expanded, would constitute a marked physical impediment to the evocation of the mental attitude of humility, and would be conducive to the arousal of an internal sentiment of pride and arrogant hauteur. Though the reason why certain physical postures tend to induce definite mental states lies deep in the history of the race and need not be traced here, yet the fact of such influence is admitted by psychologists of every school.

After the completion of the prayers at the foot of the altar, the first act of the celebrant upon ascending to the altar is to stoop and kiss it out of reverence for the relics of the saints which are imbedded therein. Mass in the early days of the Church was celebrated over the tombs of the martyrs. The historical identity of the Mass in the Church today with that enacted in the catacombs over the remains of the martyrs is thus dramatically expressed. The physical act of kissing the altar reverently is designed to manifest one's affectionate reverence for the martyrs and is well adapted to arouse in one the corresponding internal sentiments of love and devotion.

When the celebrant proceeds to the missal to read the prayers, it will be noted that he extends his arms and holds them in this position until the prayers or supplications preceding the epistle are finished. Here again one will observe how splendidly adapted is this physical posture to evoke the



desired conscious state of supplication. From time immemorial the suppliant has pleaded with outstretched arms for his petition. The physical posture has thus come to serve as a powerful stimulant for the arousal of the psychical attitude of entreaty.

### *The Significance of the Gospel Ceremonies*

Upon the completion of the epistle with its gradual and tract, the celebrant proceeds to the centre preparatory to reading the gospel. In order that the holy gospel be worthily announced there are required not only a pure heart and pure lips, but the person proclaiming it must have a special mission with the approbation and blessing of God upon him. That is why the celebrant pausing at the center of the altar raises his eyes to the crucifix in external acknowledgment of the great source whence flow so many blessings and spiritual helps, namely, the death of Christ on the Cross. Then he bows low in outward physical acknowledgment of his spiritual unworthiness to announce the sublime truths of the gospel. While still bent in that posture of humility he articulates the moving prayer that is implicit in his whole bodily demeanor: "*Cleanse my heart and my lips, O Almighty God, Who didst cleanse the lips of the Prophet Isaias with a burning coal; and vouchsafe through Thy gracious mercy, so to purify me, that I may worthily announce Thy holy gospel. Amen.*"

When the celebrant begins to read the gospel he traces with his thumb the figure of the cross over the first words of the Evangel, to express in this external manner the fact that all the spiritual values contained therein have been rendered available to us through the merits of Christ's death upon the Cross, and that it records the history of His life and sufferings. Both the congregation and the celebrant then make the sign of the cross upon their forehead, lips and breast. This is a threefold public profession of their reverence for the inspired word, believing it with their minds, proclaiming it with their lips, and loving it with their hearts.

It will be noted that when the priest crosses over from the center to begin the reading of the gospel, the entire congregation immediately arises and remains standing until its completion. Here again the visitor perceives that magnificent adaptation of bodily behavior to evoke the desired mental

correlate. By standing, the congregation immediately manifests its reverence for the gospel as the inspired word of God, worthy of a respect paid to no human proclamation. Furthermore, the physical posture thus assumed is well calculated to induce the mental attitude of alacrity in receiving the precepts of the gospel and in executing them.

At the completion of the gospel, the celebrant raises the missal to his lips, and kisses devoutly the first words of the gospel just read. Observe again how the Church utilizes the physical action most suited for the arousal of that psychical attitude of affectionate reverence with which the inspired word of God should be regarded. The kiss, which from time immemorial has been the motor expression of the sentiments of love throbbing in the bosom of the race, is pressed into the sacred service of religious liturgy in stirring anew the latent affection of the creature for his Savior and in enlisting the dynamic activity of the will in His sacred ministry. In order to secure that whole-hearted adherence to the gospel precepts that manifests itself in action, there is required not merely the appeal to the cognitive faculty but to the motor one of the will as well. It is the arousal of the love of the creature for his Redeemer that carries over to the will and thus touches off the springs of human action. It is no pale or cold intellectual attitude that the ceremonies of Catholic worship evoke, but an attitude in which the mind bows in reverent faith, and the heart is stirred with holy emotions that seek expression in appropriate movements of the will and in external deed.

Before concluding the discussion of the general manner in which the ceremonies of the Mass exemplify the wise utilization of the fundamental principle of physiological psychology, namely, that bodily postures and movements exercise a powerful influence in the evocation of definite psychical attitudes, let us scrutinize briefly the action of the consecration, which is the most important part of the sacrifice.

### *The Consecration*

The acolyte has rung a little bell to summon the attention of all the congregation to the soul-stirring scene that is about to be enacted before them. Then the celebrant takes bread in his hands, blesses it and bending low over it pro-

nounces the sublime words of consecration, which Christ Himself used at the Last Supper. Note how the whole corporal attitude of the priest, the bent body, the bowed head, the eyes focused intently upon the upraised bread soon to be changed through a miracle of divine power into the body and blood of Christ, induces a mental "set" of quivering attention and rapt absorption. What an effective antidote is found in this tense physical posture against distractions and day-dreaming which come so readily when the corporal attitude is one of ease and relaxation. The bodily posture, the nervous set, the focusing of the senses, all converge as so many powerful stimuli to provoke the greatest possible mental concentration upon the significance of the momentous words of consecration which the celebrant pronounces so slowly and so deliberately: "*For this is My Body.*"

The celebrant genuflects immediately to manifest through this corporal action the adoration which he renders with his whole heart and soul to his Eucharistic Lord. Then he raises the Sacred Host aloft before the eyes of the rapt congregation so that they too may adore and articulate the deep sentiments of faith and love which are stirring in their souls with the heartfelt ejaculation: "*My Lord and my God.*"

After replacing the Holy Eucharist upon the altar the celebrant genuflects again, thus emphasizing in an outward physical manner the adoration and worship which should now be rendered to the Eucharistic King. The same corporal postures and movements are reenacted in the consecration of the chalice of wine into the body and the blood of the Lord. During the consecration the faithful kneel, following with rapt attention and profound devotion the various acts in the consecration occurring before them. These instances will suffice to show that the fundamental law of the mind-body relationship finds generous recognition and splendid embodiment in the ceremonies of the Mass.

#### *The Pedagogical Value of Ceremonies*

Let us turn now from the consideration of the psychological significance of the ceremonies of the Mass as factors in the arousal of religious sentiment and emotions, and view them in their other role as media for the presentation of educational concepts. For, in addition to their important function in the awakening of appropriate religious sentiments,

the ceremonies serve to translate into the language of the senses, doctrines whose abstract verbal formulation would frequently prove less effective in conveying to the minds of the great masses of the faithful clear ideas as to their significance.

The visitor on crossing the threshold of a Catholic church perceives immediately the generous display of paintings, statues, frescoes, and pictorial representations woven into the stained glass windows. Beautiful impressions rain upon his senses from every object on which his eyes fall. The whole edifice with its paintings and sculptures, its organ peals and lighted candles, becomes almost vocal in singing the praises and the glory of the Eucharistic King enthroned in the tabernacle of the altar.

Thus the Church has long antedated the findings of Comenius and of Pestalozzi in her generous use of the object method of teaching. In the formulation of this method, which revolutionized the educational technique of his day, and which still serves as the fundamental idea pervading all modern methodology, Pestalozzi says: "The most essential point from which I start is this: Sense impression (*Anschaunungsunterricht*) of nature is the only true foundation of human knowledge. All that follows is the result of this sense impression and the process of abstraction from it." The importance of sense impressions as the necessary basis for all mental concepts is likewise insisted upon by scholastic philosophy which has held as almost axiomatic the principle: "There can be no concept in the mind which was not previously in some way in the senses."<sup>1</sup>

This principle held alike by Pestalozzi and the Scholastics finds generous exemplification in the practice of the Church. The meaning of Pentecost, redemption, crucifixion, resurrection and transfiguration are illustrated in paintings, sculpturings, frescoes and mosaics woven into stained glass windows. How rich and vivid even to little children becomes the meaning of the Savior's Nativity when shown by images of the Divine Babe in the manger at Bethlehem, attended by Mary and Joseph, with the cattle in the stable, and the shepherds and their flocks hurrying across the hillsides of Judea to pay homage to their new-born King. In any appraisal of

<sup>1</sup>Nil in intellectu nisi prius aliquomodo in sensu.

the psychological means used by the Church for the development of sense impressions and rich imagery upon which to build later the abstract concepts of religious dogmas, due recognition must be accorded the significant role played by the object method as universally exemplified in the Catholic Church.

#### *The Mass—A Religious Drama*

A kindred means of appealing to the senses in the imparting of religious truth is the drama. The Mass with its colorful vestments and vivid ceremonies is a dramatic reenactment in an unbloody manner of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. In its symbolism and liturgy it carries the mind of the spectator over the story of the Savior's passion, from the time of His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane as symbolized by the celebrant bending low and striking his breast at the Confiteor, to His death on the Cross as typified by the breaking of the Sacred Host. The recital of the *Ite, Missa est*, and the last Gospel at the end of the Mass typify the Savior's final Commission to the Apostles to go and preach the Gospel to all nations.

Note too the vivid symbolism of the colors of the vestments worn by the priest. White signifies joy and purity, and is used on the feasts of the joyful mysteries in our Savior's life, and on the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, Confessors and Virgins. Red reminds the faithful of the blood that was shed for the faith of Christ. Red vestments are worn accordingly on the feasts of martyrs and of Apostles, on the feasts of the Savior's passion and on Whit Sunday in memory of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. Green is appropriately used as the symbol of hope, as the first signs of life in nature after the desolation of winter come in the form of blades of green grass and verdant foliage that echo forth the hope of the soul's life after the body's death. Green is worn at times that have no particular color of their own, such as the Sundays between Epiphany and Septuagesima and between Trinity Sunday and Advent. Purple which is emblematic of penance is worn during Advent and Lent and on the vigils of great feasts. Black, the symbol of death, is used on Good Friday and in Masses for the dead. Thus does the Church portray to the faithful in the vivid and universal language of color the char-

acter of the feast and of the Mass which is being enacted before their eyes.

Likewise the meaning of Christ's suffering and death is depicted by the moving liturgy of the Mass, which reaches its climax in the dramatic elevation of the Sacred Host at the moment of consecration. Here is a wealth of drama and pagantry which speaks to the spectators in the oldest language of the race—the Esperanto of gesture and pantomime. Vivid, indeed, are the sense impressions and rich the imagery accruing to the congregation from the Church's generous use of the object method in the presentation of her teachings, from her use of the plastic and pictorial arts, from the exquisitely wrought symbolism and colorful ceremonial of the Mass, with its elements of moving drama and stately pagantry. Through these numerous avenues there flows a series of stimuli which impinging upon the mind, stir the emotions and enlist the whole personality in the rendering of religious worship. Acts of religious devotion, instead of becoming mere perfunctory physical gestures of a rote character, are thus kept vital and pregnant with emotion and meaning. In maintaining such vitality in religious worship, vividness of sense impression and richness of mental imagery are of basic importance.

#### *The Aesthetic Influence of the Liturgy*

Lastly, the liturgy of Catholic worship in its widest sense has a distinct influence in the development of the aesthetic sense in the worshippers. The most dramatic and impressive ceremonial possible to devise has sprung from the effort to translate the significance of the Mass into sign and gesture. Many of the supreme creations of music have resulted from the attempt to express through concords of sound the subtle religious emotions aroused by the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary. The vast majority of the immortal masterpieces of painting have been inspired by the religious impulse. The Cathedrals of Europe, enriched with the priceless paintings of Raphael, Leonardo Da Vinci, Titian, Michelangelo, Fra Angelico, and Fra Bartolommeo remain to this day as the great art treasures of the world. The modern traveler is surprised to learn too that practically all the themes of these great painters are religious ones.

In walking through the quaint old Dominican monastery



of San Marco in Florence, where Savonarola presided as Prior, the writer observed on the wall of almost every cell a religious painting from the brush of the immortal Fra Angelico. Art thus served as the handmaid of religion, quickening the devotion of the individual and seeking to render the supernatural more vivid and real to him through the most beautiful productions of the creative geniuses of the race. So, too, the great sculptors found in religion the stimulus to create immortal works. The traveler who will stand for fifteen minutes before the great statue of Moses, by Michelangelo, in the Church of St. Peter in Chains in Rome, will receive an impression of the stern character of the great lawgiver of the Israelites, which for vividness and richness could be duplicated by probably no other means in the world.

The lavish use of the fine arts in the embellishment of Catholic worship exercises both consciously and unconsciously its influence in developing the appreciation of the beautiful. "This consciousness," says Horne,<sup>1</sup> "is as truly emotional in character as it is intellectual or volitional. And the sense of beauty is the finest differentiation of the life of feeling in man. The coldness of intellectuality and the narrowness of practicality are warmed and widened through the love of the beautiful. To an intellectual soul beauty says there are values that can be felt which cannot be described; to a practical soul beauty says there are useless things which are also precious. The knowledge of the truth makes one discerning, but not tender; the volition of the good makes one correct, but not attractive; it is the love of beauty that unifies a life in one perfect whole.

"The sense of beauty is cultivated when the eyes and ears and soul are open to the perfections of the work of man and nature; when a badly constructed building offends; when the eye rests with content upon a perfect statue or a splendid picture; when the ear enjoys a symphony, and the soul is thrilled with the meaningful message of literature; when the hills give strength, and the sky exultation; when the mountain lake gives peace and the ocean stirs a divine discontent within; when the rainbow gives promise, and the sunset,

<sup>1</sup>H. H. Horne, *Psychological Principles of Education*, Macmillan Co., pp. 245, 246.

vision, and the evening time, light; when the night brings no terror, and the storm a sublime awe; when all the visible and audible forms of nature quicken in man the sense that the perfect is here about us in the material world and only waiting to be enjoyed; when, in short, man's nature is offended at all ugliness and rejoices in all beauty."

It is aesthetic sentiments of this nature aroused and fostered by the sublime stirrings of religious experience, which find portrayal in the matchless lines of Wordsworth—lines which echo the feelings of every devout worshipper at the great drama of the Mass.

"I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man."

Students of the psychology of aesthetics from Edmund Burke, who attempted to correlate the feeling of beauty with a general physiological relaxation and that of sublimity with physiological strain and tension, down to Fechner who has attempted to place it on an experimental basis, and reduce it to an exact science, have recognized the kinship of the aesthetic and the moral sentiments. George Eliot gives apt expression to the intimacy of the relationship between these two sentiments when she writes in "Romola": "It seems to me beauty is part of the finished language by which goodness speaks."

From what has been said thus far, it becomes evident even to a visitor from outside the fold that the ceremonies of that central act of Catholic worship, the Sacrifice of the Mass, are by no means so many idle gestures. On the contrary they represent the supreme achievement of the human mind in the enlistment of the whole human personality in the rendering of public worship to Almighty God. They induce a mental attitude and an emotional tone that harmonize admirably with the overt act of homage, giving to it an inner depth and a resonance without which it would be merely a mechanical gesture of rote character. Just as there is a

world of difference between the discord produced by the novice who thwacks away clumsily upon the cords of the violin and the rare melody teased from the strings by the deft touches of a master artist, so there is a corresponding difference between the clangorous reverberations produced on the bodily sounding board by the haphazard movements and bodily swaying of the amateur evangelist, and the delicate concord of emotional tones that swell into a great psychic symphony from the carefully planned harmonium of prayer and ceremony that constitute the sublime drama of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

#### *A Contrast*

Sometime ago the writer stood in a mosque just off The Street Called Straight in the ancient city of Damascus witnessing the performance of the Howling and Dancing Dervishes. The violent physical capers, the continued whirling with its consequent disturbance of the semicircular canals and incipient vertigo, the incessant howling frequently of a single phrase, indicate the utter abandon with which the devotee works himself into a religious frenzy. While in this state of *majdhub* or frenzy the Rifa'ites or howling dervishes cut themselves with knives, eat small serpents and handle live coals and red-hot irons. Here is a religious ceremonial which by the violence of its gyrations unleashes such a riotous tumult of organic reverberations as to overwhelm reason, hurling it into a sort of hypnotic daze.

In the Mosque of Santa Sophia in Constantinople the visitor sees exemplified the ritual which regulates the manner of praying of the vast majority of Mohammedans. While kneeling, the person in prayer sways back and forth repeatedly, and bends so low that at times he touches his head to the floor and at other times touches merely his hands to the floor. As the writer studied carefully the exercises which the Mohammedans were going through before him, he became conscious that they were really splendid calisthenics, but nothing more. Indeed upon investigating their genesis one discovers that this was apparently the primary purpose for which Mohammed had designed them—to serve as a wholesome antidote for the natural indolence of this people living, as they were, in a warm climate which strengthened their aversion to physical exercise. There is, however, no

aptitude in these rather systematic calisthenic exercises to induce an attitude of religious devotion.

Not reaching such extremes in frenzy as the dervishes but similar in kind are the antics at many Negro camp meetings, at meetings of the "holy rollers" and at some revival meetings where the evangelist jumps and shouts and works the audience into a state of great religious excitement where they are shouting ejaculations with partial incoherence. Indeed at times they reach a stage of utter nervous exhaustion, foaming at the mouth and losing consciousness.

Contrast the antics at such religious meetings with their wild abandon and lack of all restraint with the calm, dignified, studied and restrained liturgy guiding the worship at the august drama of the Mass. Instead of the submergence of reason beneath the waves of emotions lashed into a tempest, there is the dignified curbing of emotion which keeps it always under the rein of reason. Instead of the chaotic arousal of all the religious susceptibilities of the individual into a near frenzy there is the careful selection of the emotional tone that harmonizes best with the particular part of the Mass that is being enacted and its evocation only to such a gentle degree that it does not befog in any way the rational aspect of the act of worship. In other words, reason is always maintained upon the throne of consciousness in the various acts of worship in the Mass, instead of enthroning the emotions to the enslavement of reason in the excitation of religious frenzy and hysteria. Instead of the mere thumping upon all the notes in the bodily diapason with the resultant discord there is the intelligent selection of different notes and their deft grouping into measured cadences and moving symphonies.

#### *"Evocation of the Eternal"*

Perhaps no one has described the psychological potency and exquisite charm of the ceremonies and prayers of the Mass with such haunting beauty as the great scholar of Oxford, Cardinal Newman. "To me," he says, "nothing is so consoling, so piercing, so thrilling, so overcoming, as the Mass, said as it is among us. I could attend Masses forever, and not be tired. It is not a mere form of words—it is a great action, the greatest action that can be on earth. It is not the invocation merely, but if I dare use the word, the

evocation of the Eternal. He comes present on the altar in flesh and blood, before Whom angels bow and devils tremble. That is that awful event which is the scope, and the interpretation, of every part of the solemnity. Words are necessary, but as means, not as ends; they are not mere addresses to the throne of grace, they are instruments of what is far higher, of consecration, of sacrifice. They hurry on, as if impatient to fulfill their mission. Quickly they go, the whole is quick, for they are all parts of one integral action. Quickly they go, for they are awful words of sacrifice, they are a work too great to delay upon, as when it was said in the beginning, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' Quickly they pass, for the Lord Jesus goes with them, as He passed along the lake in the days of His flesh, quickly calling first one and then another; quickly they pass, because as the lightning which shineth from one part of the heaven unto the other, so is the coming of the Son of Man. Quickly they pass, for they are as the words of Moses when the Lord came down in the cloud, calling on the name of the Lord as He passed by, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.' And as Moses on the mountain, so we too 'make haste and bow our heads to earth and adore.' "

Thus it will be seen that the ceremonies of Catholic worship and especially of its greatest action, the sacrifice of the Mass, representing as they do the ripe fruits of nineteen centuries of the experience and the strivings of the human soul to articulate its love and devotion to its God and Savior, stand out as among the supreme achievements of the human mind in the field of religious worship. They exemplify in a superb manner the basic principles of modern psychology in the domain of religious worship. They are the finished language through which the heart of the creature speaks to the heart of his God.

### Discussion Aids

Explain why the Church in her Liturgy embraces the dual nature of man, the psychical and the physical. Explain how mind and body exercise a mutually interactive influence. Show how both body and soul assist at Mass, by tracing the functions of both from the Confiteor through the celebration of the Mass. What is the pedagogical value of its externals of worship? Discuss the Mass as a religious drama. Discuss the aesthetic influence of the Liturgy. Read aloud the passage in the text quoted from Cardinal Newman.

#### *Practices:*

Make all your bodily actions at Mass show the reverent spirit of worship.

Genuflect on your right knee all the way to the floor.

Look at the Sacred Host at the Elevation and say "My Lord and my God!"



## Chapter XXXI

### WHY ATTEND SUNDAY MASS?

#### *The Spectacle Which Thrills the World*

"There is too large an element of compulsion in the Catholic religion. Its members are constrained by multitudinous laws to do this, forbidden to do that. They seldom enjoy any option in the matter. Take their attendance at Mass on Sunday. They are obliged under pain of mortal sin to attend. Why not recognize that children at last grow up? Why not respect the intellectual maturity of the individual and allow him to decide for himself whether he wishes to attend Mass, instead of forcing him by a positive command? Why not make it a matter of option instead of obligation?"

Such is a view frequently expressed by our non-Catholic fellow citizens. While admiring many features of the Church's teachings, many profess to be deterred from entering the fold because they fear their liberty would be too greatly restricted. They wish to engage in religious exercises only when the spirit moves them, only when they feel like doing so. With them the attendance at religious worship is a matter of mood and caprice, not one of principle or law binding them independently of mood or whim.

The practice of making one's religious life hinge upon mood or rest upon the stable foundation of principle and law represents a point of fundamental divergence between the Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church. For the sake of clarity and brevity, we will focus our attention upon the matter of attendance at divine services, though what is said here will be seen to apply all along the line. Let us ask our dear non-Catholic friend to look into the matter with an open mind, and see for himself if the policy of the Church in this regard does not reflect the voice of reason and the voice of God. Let us see whether the teaching of the Church mirrors a spirit of excessive paternalism cramping the freedom of the individual or whether it is a mighty bulwark

against the anarchy of riotous individualism and an antidote necessary to safeguard the stability of the religious life from the menace of mood and whim.

#### *A Universal Duty*

General obligations need to be particularized and rendered specific if they are to secure universal or widespread observance. The obligation to worship God is universal. It binds all mankind—red, white, black, yellow and brown. Its observance has not been left to the caprice or whim of man. For amid thunder and lightning, Jehovah gave to Moses on Mount Sinai the tablet on which was inscribed the command: "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day." Thus did Almighty God particularize a general obligation.

The mandate to worship God was carved not only on tablets of stone, but upon the fleshy tablets of the human heart. The tendency to worship springs spontaneously from one of the deepest instincts of our nature. That tribe is yet to be discovered which offers not prayer or sacrifice to the great Supreme Ruler of the universe. Anthropologists and historians investigating the life and customs of ancient races, in all the stages varying from barbarism to civilization, have been struck by the universality of the practice of rendering homage to the deity. Pope was thus able to write with scientific accuracy:

"Father of all; in every age,  
In every clime adored,  
By saint, by savage, and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."

Though the methods of worship and of sacrifice differ in a thousand ways, though the deity is called by various names and worshipped under myriad forms, running through all of them is the same fundamental human cry—the cry of the creature to his Creator, the voice acknowledging the absolute dependence of the subject upon his Lord and God. It is this acknowledgment of the creature's complete dependence upon the Creator that constitutes the very heart and soul of all religious worship. Our coming to church, our kneeling down, our prayers, especially our assistance at Mass, are so many ways in which we profess our dependence upon God and acknowledge His sovereign dominion over us.

*By What Title?*

The worship of God does not rest, however, upon mere custom, no matter how universal or hoary that may be. It is founded upon the very law of nature. For by creating us out of nothing, Almighty God possesses sovereign dominion over us by the strongest of all titles, namely, creation. By taking a worthless block of crude, unshapely marble and carving out of it a great statue, "a thing of beauty and a joy forever," a sculptor acquires title to the statue. Why? Because by his toil and genius he gives to it whatever value it possesses. So by the even stronger title of absolute creation has the Creator complete dominion over all His creatures, the work of His hands. The relationship existing between the creature and the Creator as rooted in the law of nature is, therefore, one of the most complete dependence on the part of the creature upon his Creator, both for his creation and for his conservation in existence. Every human being owes the duty of acknowledging this dependence by acts of worship and adoration. Consequently the duty to worship springs from the law of nature, binds all human beings who have reached the age of reason and has been given explicit formulation in the divine positive law revealed by Almighty God to Moses.

Can not such a duty be fulfilled, however, by giving to God merely interior worship, that is, by adoring Him in our minds only, without any external manifestations of our worship? Thus one might say: "I will stay at home on Sunday morning and worship God in my own mind, without kneeling down or folding my hands or uttering words of prayer, and thus satisfy the natural precept of worshipping." The person who would do only this, would fail to give God the complete worship to which He has a right. For God is the Creator of our bodies not less than of our minds and souls. Therefore both the mind and the body should participate in rendering to the Almighty a complete act of worship.

As a matter of fact this dictate of our reason is further confirmed by an interesting side-light which modern psychology offers. For psychology tells us that the person who never gives external expression to his internal sentiments and feelings will cause them to be choked, stunted and gradually

atrophied, while on the other hand, suitable external expression strengthens and intensifies them. Thus the devotions of the Church in which the faithful kneel before the altar in suppliant posture, fold the hands, strike the breast, and utter ardent words of prayer, far from lessening fervor, greatly strengthen and vivify it.

So much, then, for the existence of a general obligation on the part of all mankind to worship God. Now let us examine the specific manner in which that obligation is to be discharged, as revealed to us not by unaided human reason but by the light from on high.

*Light From On High*

In the old law, the strict observance of the Sabbath was prescribed under the severest penalties, even the penalty of death itself. "Observe the day of the Sabbath, to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee."<sup>1</sup> In thundering tones the prophets condemned violations of the Sabbath, saying: "What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? Did not our fathers do these things and our God brought all this evil upon us, and upon this city? And you bring more wrath upon Israel by violating the Sabbath."<sup>2</sup> The Book of Macchabees records that the arrogant monarch Antiochus who defiled the temple and desecrated its altars, and violated "the sabbaths" and "the solemn days of the fathers," was punished with a loathsome malady that terminated in death.

When Christ came upon earth he did not nullify this law, but by His own example He confirmed it. He did strip it, however, of some of the accretions of the Pharisees, who considered works of charity and of mercy as unlawful on that day. It was on the Sabbath that Christ cured the sick at the pool of Bethesda, healed the cripple with the withered hand in the synagogue, and restored health to the man sick with the dropsy. To the Pharisees who appeared scandalized that the Master should work a good deed on the sabbath, he said: "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." "What man shall there be among you, that hath a sheep: and if the same shall fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he

<sup>1</sup>Deut. v. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Isa. xlii. 17, 18.

not take hold on it and lift it up? How much better is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do a good deed on the Sabbath day."<sup>1</sup>

### *Why Sunday?*

Under the Old Law, the Sabbath or seventh day of the week was observed because on that day God rested from his labors of creation, and on that day He delivered the Jewish people from the galling yoke of their Egyptian bondage. The observance of the Sabbath served, therefore, as a traditional reminder of their miraculous deliverance in accordance with the words of the Almighty: "Remember that thou also didst serve in Egypt and the Lord thy God brought thee out from thence with a strong hand and a stretched out arm. Therefore hath He commanded thee that thou shouldst observe the Sabbath day."<sup>2</sup>

The Old Law was but an image or foreshadowing of the Light and Truth that was to come. When that Light came in the personality of Jesus, the old Mosaic law having fulfilled its function of preparing the Jews for the coming of the Messiah was abrogated as regards its ceremonial prescriptions in favor of the new dispensation or law of Christ.

To signalize this transition from the old to the new law, the Apostles transferred the observance to the Sunday, the first day of the week. Sunday was chosen because on that day was wrought the greatest miracle of the Christian religion, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It was on Sunday also that the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles and sent them out to preach the Gospel to the world. Sunday is, therefore, the birthday of the Christian Church.

How are we to observe the Sunday? The Church by the authority divinely committed to her has given explicit formulation of the obligation contained in the third commandment by telling us in her first precept: "Thou shalt hear Mass on Sunday and holydays of obligation and thou shalt abstain from servile work." The positive part of this precept binds all the faithful who have attained the use of reason to hear Mass on Sunday and holydays under pain of mortal sin. Grave causes such as sickness, lack of a church in the town or within a reasonable distance, or other circumstances which

render it very difficult to attend Mass, will excuse a person from guilt in this matter. A person with a good conscience will not magnify little inconveniences into insurmountable obstacles. He will scorn such flimsy excuses as the weather being too hot or too cold, rain or snow, as unworthy of a true follower of Jesus Christ. Realizing that the secrets of the heart are as an open book to Almighty God who knows whether or not the individual can attend if he really wants to, he does not engage in the chicanery of trying to throw dust in the eyes of an omniscient deity by manufacturing weak and flimsy excuses.

### *Vitality of Religion*

The history of the past nineteen hundred years demonstrates the wisdom of the Church's action in rendering this divine command definite and specific and in attaching to it a proper moral sanction. By that I mean, making it bind in conscience under penalty of grievous sin. For not only in our country but throughout Christendom it is Catholics who give to the world a demonstration of the vitality of religion and of unfaltering belief in a God worthy of our reverence and worship, by thronging to Mass at every Catholic Church in the world.

Some years ago a Chicago newspaper undertook to find out how many people were attending church on Sunday. Stationing reporters at every church and synagogue in that great city, they counted every person who entered. The results were little short of startling. They discovered that 85 per cent of all the people attending divine services passed through the portals of the Catholic Church. So it is largely throughout our country and throughout Christendom.

Take the campus of the University of Illinois. With students in attendance from most of the cities and towns in the State and from throughout the nation, it represents a fair cross section of our population. Non-Catholic friends who have attended most of the other churches on the campus have estimated that the student attendance at all the churches averages about two thousand. Though we number but about ten per cent of the student enrollment at the University, we have in attendance each Sunday about as many as all the other churches and synagogues on the campus put together. I mention this not in a spirit of boasting, but as an evidence

<sup>1</sup>Matt. xii, 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup>Deut. v, 15.



of the wisdom of the Church in lifting this matter out of the domain of unstable whims and moods and rendering it one of stern obligation—of obedience to a divine command. It is an evidence too of the inexhaustible vigor and vitality of the Catholic religion which has always made the worship, the love, and the service of God its primary objective.

#### *What Is The Matter?*

In a letter published in *The Daily Illini*, in the Autumn of 1933, a student told of visiting two of the so-called "liberal churches" on the campus on Homecoming Sunday. "I had expected," she said, "to find a large attendance at such churches in a University community. What I actually found was a picture of desolation—an attendance of 37 at one and 49 at the other. What is the matter with students at this University?" was the plaintive query with which she closed. Without uncharitableness the question might better have been: "What is the matter with such churches?"

The answer is: They have abdicated their most important and distinctive function—the worshipping of God, and the instilling of love and deathless devotion to Him in the hearts of their people. Instead of temples for the worship of God, they have become lecture halls for the discussion of problems in sociology, economics, ethics, philosophy, science and politics. The name of God is spoken but rarely and then half apologetically as a curtsy reluctantly given out of deference to ancient religious usage and thought which are now largely *passé*. At other times the name of God is used in a vague, nebulous manner, as a synonym for Nature or the Cosmos, from which every connotation of personality has been rigorously torn. The stern condemnation uttered by Christ against those who misused the temple in His day might well be paraphrased today: "My house is a house of prayer. But you have made it a lecture hall for the discussion of everything under the sun but religion."

The simple truth is: People may discuss science and art. They may be interested in the coloring of a rose. They may admire a sunset or a waterfall. But they can love only a person and worship only a God. There can be no substitute for a personal God, a Heavenly Father, from whom we come and to whose all-embracing arms we shall ultimately return. The golden calf of wealth, the flesh pots of sensual indulgence, the

fetish of science, intrigue for a day but they leave unsatisfied the deepest cravings of the human heart for union with its God and Maker. "Our hearts have been made for Thee, O God, and they shall never rest until they rest in Thee!" This cry of Augustine sounded after running through the whole diapason of the varied sensuality of ancient Rome, re-echoes the anguish of humanity today, surfeited with jazz and pleasures which excite but never satisfy.

Francis Thompson portrays the relationship between God and man which holds today, and which will hold till the crack of doom, when he depicts the Almighty warning wayward man: "All things betray thee who betrayest me." There is something in the structure and in the heart of the universe which responds to goodness, truth, beauty and love, with divine compensations but which dooms their opposites to decadence and death.

#### *What the Mass Is*

The Mass is the central act of devotion in the Catholic religion. It is the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary. When the priest bends low over the bread and wine, and pronounces those tremendous words, the most momentous ever framed by human lips, "This is my body: This is my blood," the heaven of heavens opens, and the King and Ruler of the universe, Jesus Christ, comes down upon our altar, to be lifted up as a sacrificial Victim for the sins of the world. If we could but tear away the veil which hides from our eyes the vision of our Lord and Savior, how we would kneel breathless and transfixed in the rapture of a great devotion. It is a moment when the world falls away and we unworthy sinners kneel in the presence of the divine. "I could attend Masses forever," said Cardinal Newman, "and not be tired." That brief hour at Mass should be the happiest and the holiest of all our week.

The attendance at Mass is the mark of a practical Catholic. One who fails to attend is not worthy of the name. While all mortal sins involve great malice, there is attached to this sin a peculiar and unique malice. Other sins like anger or lust are usually the result of a great passion which clouds the reason and shakes the will. But missing Mass is done in cold blood—calmly, deliberately, wilfully. The sinner says in effect: Though you suffered excruciating pain on Calvary's

Cross and died thereon for me, yet I will not give you one hour out of the 168 hours you give me every week." It is the action of an ingrate. God punishes it accordingly. It is one of the surest ways of losing one's religion and dying in mortal sin. As the tree inclines, so shall it fall. As it falls, so shall it lie. As a man lives, so shall he die. As he dies, so shall he spend eternity.

#### *Why People Miss Mass*

Why do people miss Mass? Failure to understand the meaning of Mass, carelessness, laziness, worldliness, and a lack of moral backbone when in non-Catholic surroundings. These are some of the causes. But the chief cause is a sinful life. Habits of sin, secret or public, cry out against attendance at a religious service which scourges them with ceaseless reproach. Why attend Mass when every moment rebukes me for my secret vice? is a question that inevitably arises. This fact is illustrated by the following incident.

A student had ceased to attend Mass and had abandoned the practice of his religion. "It's all buncombe," he said to some of his fellow students who tried to remonstrate with him. "Priests are in it for what they can get out of it," he said. "It's just a racket, and I want none of it. I don't believe in it any longer." Some months later he was about to be arrested on a paternity charge. Seizing an auto he sought to escape. Rounding a corner at full speed, the auto turned over and pinned him, badly mangled, underneath. "God," he cried to the state policeman who had just caught up with him. "Get me a priest. I'm dying. I want a priest badly." With eternity closing in upon him, he threw aside his mask of make-believe and faced the terrible reality.

Blood was flowing from gaping wounds in his neck and forehead. The policeman sped for the nearest Catholic Church several miles away. When he returned with a priest, consciousness had almost left the dying man. Glassy eyes distorted with the wild look of horror that came into his face as he realized he was dying in mortal sin, was all that greeted the priest bending low over him, seeking to hear his confession. "God! God!" he was murmuring half unconsciously, "It's too late—too late." A few convulsive twitchings of the lips and he was dead.

In the inside pocket of his coat was found a newspaper

clipping. It told of a priest who had gone wrong. What a flood of light that frayed clipping threw upon the mental processes he had gone through in those last five months. It requires no expert in psychology to see therein the sop he was trying to throw to his disturbed conscience. Stabbed with the consciousness of a double life, a habit of flagrant sin, he sought to rationalize his conduct. That is, he tried to find reasons to justify it. Unwilling to make conduct conform to the moral code of his religious faith, he sought to destroy the latter, saying, "It's all buncombe. It's all a racket." He reached out for the clipping concerning a single priest as a drowning man grasps for a straw. Because Judas betrayed Christ, because Peter denied Him, because Thomas doubted, religion is all buncombe. Such are the straws for which people with guilty consciences have grasped throughout the ages in the futile effort to stay the waves of remorse flooding their soul and drowning them in a sea of anguish and torture.

#### *A Mechanism of Escape*

This mental quirk is called by psychologists the tendency to rationalize conduct. It had better be called the tendency to irrationalize conduct, for that is what it is. Nature rebels against a dichotomy, a splitting of itself into two warring camps. When a man believes one thing and does the opposite, nature seeks to effect a unity. The logical procedure is to make his conduct conform to his approved moral code. Failing to do this, nature seeks to stop the gnawing of remorse by making belief conform to practice. This subtle treachery of the mind is a mechanism of escape, a symptom of a mind awry. It is a flight from a disagreeable situation into a world of unreality where folly masquerades in the garb of make-believe, and hides under a veneer of artifice.

"Woman," says G. K. Chesterton half in humor, "uses her intelligence to find reasons to support her intuitions." The sinner, unwilling to reform, uses his intelligence to find reasons to justify his mode of life. The name for this tendency of the mind to rationalize bad conduct is new, but the knowledge of it is old. Shakespeare gives a capital illustration. In the castle at Inverness, Macbeth has just murdered Duncan, the king. His hands are bloody, his face pale with fear, as he meets Lady Macbeth and reports hearing two ser-

vants of the king wake in their sleep and speak. The following dialogue occurs:

Macbeth:

One cried, *God bless us!* and *Amen*, the other;  
As they had seen me, with these hangman's hands,  
Listening their fear, I could not say amen,  
When they did say, God bless us.

Lady Macbeth: Consider it not so deeply.

Macbeth:

But wherefore could I not pronounce, amen?  
I had most need of blessing, and amen  
Stuck in my throat.

Lady Macbeth: These deeds must not be thought after these ways; so, it will make us mad.

When Shakespeare depicts Lady Macbeth uttering those words, he gives recognition to a universal tendency of the human mind to shrink from the frank acknowledgment of an evil deed, and to endeavor to escape by dressing it up in the garb of virtue. Murder must yield to a sweeter name which breathes the fragrance of innocence. It is a habit as old as Adam, who sought to hide his guilt behind his helpmate, Eve.

#### *Attend Entire Mass*

The remedy for the habit of missing Mass, for negligence in the practice of one's religion, for alleged lack of faith, is seldom argument. In most cases the remedy is to tear down the skeleton dangling in the family closet, to confess the secret vice, to begin to obey the moral law, to turn to Christ in penitence and prayer. A good conscience and a pure heart are more helpful than clear eyes in seeing God and in sensing the invisible realities of the spiritual world. Face toward the light and the shadows flee behind you.

The precept of hearing Mass obliges one to be present at the very inception of the holy sacrifice. People who display diligence and ingenuity in getting to their other appointments on time and to their trains ten and fifteen minutes in advance will, strangely enough, tramp into the august sacrifice with shocking tardiness. Such tardiness not only distracts and disedifies the entire congregation, but it manifests a lack of reverence for the great supreme Master, who is both the High Priest and Victim of the sublime sacrifice that

is being offered at the altar. Accidents, of course, are always liable to happen. Any one may at some time be late through unavoidable circumstances. For such there is no blame. But there is something singularly lacking in reverence for the holy sacrifice in the action of the person who is frequently or almost habitually late. If one but observes, he will note that as a rule, it is the same individuals who Sunday after Sunday come tramping into Mass with such disedifying tardiness. In order to avoid mortal sin a person must be present before the reading of the *Offertorium*, a short versicle read immediately preceding the unveiling of the Chalice. The only safe rule for a person to follow is to aim to be present in the church from five to ten minutes before Mass time.

#### *Example of Columbus*

The true Catholic will not be deterred by slight inconveniences from attending Mass. He will exhaust every ingenuity to find a way. Christopher Columbus has given an inspiring example of respect for the sanctity of the Sunday under the most trying circumstances. It illustrates the spirit of unfaltering trust in God which guided him in his voyage across the uncharted waters of unknown seas in quest of a new world. Intensely anxious though he was to reach his journey's end, with a crew mutinying because of the continued failure to sight land, the intrepid explorer nevertheless insisted on anchoring the Santa Maria and the other vessels, and spending the day in prayer out of respect for the sanctity of the Sunday. How richly the Master rewarded his fidelity, all the pages of history record.

Destroy the sanctity of the Sunday and you throw civilization back into the darkness and mire of pagan materialism. You turn back the hands on the clock of progress. In the religious chaos and anarchy following the French revolution, the irreligious suppressed the observance of the Sunday only to find the revolt of outraged human nature and interests of national progress compelling them to return to this divinely established plan. Though no friend of religion, Rousseau was eloquent in proclaiming that the observance of the Sunday was essential to the welfare of the nation.

The overwhelming majority of Catholics observe this third commandment with admirable fidelity. By the thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions, and even hundreds of



millions they come—a vast army wending its way through the bleak countryside as well as in the populous cities. Peasant, artisan, house wife, merchant, scholar, king—there are in that mighty and innumerable throng that comes to bend their heads in worship before their uplifted King and Saviour, to assist at that “clean oblation that is offered up among all nations from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof.”

### *A Prophecy Fulfilled*

There is no part of the habitable globe where that clean oblation foretold by Malachy is not offered. The traveler witnesses the fulfillment of this prophecy all the way from the little ice-covered chapel to the far stretches of the frozen North where the black robed Jesuit missionary raises the Eucharistic Lord before the adoring eyes of the Eskimaux, down to the burning sands of the Sahara where the white-gowned son of St. Dominic opens the portals of heaven and brings down to the altar the King of kings to listen to the prayers that flow from the strange tongues of the untutored children of Africa. From the mission chapels in the valleys of the Orient to the ones that nestle in the eternal snows of the Matterhorn, from the great crowded cathedrals in the populous cities of Europe to the little adobe chapels that dot the wind swept plains of Arizona and New Mexico—everywhere there is offered that sublime drama of the Mass, the mystery of mysteries, the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary. In that great hymn of praise that rises up from all the corners of the world there is mingled the soft liquid tongue of the Italian, the Spaniard, and the Frenchman with the sharper notes of the Teuton and the Slav, embracing in its final volume all the tongues of mankind as it wells into a mighty paean of adoration before the throne of the Most High. What a wonderful privilege it is to be a member of this countless host, the Catholic Church, the kingdom of God on earth!

It is the spectacle of this mighty throng of over three hundred millions of men, women and children, leaving aside the cares of the world and marching through rain and snow and inclement weather to Mass every Sunday, that constitutes a source of mystery and never-ending wonder to our separated brethren. In spite of musicales, paid singers, and

extensive advertising their own churches remain largely empty. Why the difference? One is a Church divinely established, dowered with a Pentecostal fire which has never ceased to burn. Conscious of her divinely appointed mission to speak as the voice of God to all mankind, she commands the worship of God and demands the attendance at Sunday Mass of every Catholic worthy of the name.

The other churches founded by men, conscious of no divine authority, dare not command. They entreat, plead, cajole and entice. But mankind perceives the uncertainty and vacillation in their voices. They respond according to their mood and caprice. The result is empty churches, and the decadence of religious worship among them. Is it not evident then to every fair-minded person, Catholic or non-Catholic, that the policy of the Catholic Church in removing attendance at divine worship on Sunday from the quicksands of mood and whim and placing it on the solid foundation of principle and law, is wise and just? Indeed, her action in so doing is not one of expediency but of principle. It is a compliance with the law of nature, with the voice of reason, and with a divine command.

### *Discussion Aids*

Name a point of fundamental divergence between Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church. What obligation is universal for mankind? What is at the heart of this religious worship? Explain this relationship between Creator and created. Is interior worship sufficient? Why not? Describe Sabbath observance under the Old Law. What did Christ do in regard to the existing Sabbath observance? Why was the seventh day of the week observed as the Sabbath under the Old Law? Why is Sunday observed in the New Law? What does the Church prescribe for keeping Sunday holy? Discuss. What is the Mass? Discuss attendance at Mass as the mark of a practical Catholic. Discuss “rationalizing conduct” as a reason for missing Mass. How is Malachy’s prophecy fulfilled?

### *Practices:*

Do not let trivial excuses keep you from attending Sunday Mass.

Never be late for Mass.

Assist at Mass with recollection and devotion.

## Chapter XXXII

## THE INVOCATION OF SAINTS

*It Follows As Consequence of Doctrine of the Communion of Saints*

An article of the Apostles' Creed which Christians of most denominations are accustomed to recite with all too little comprehension of its significance is: "I believe in the Communion of saints." By these words we express our belief in the teaching of Christ and the Apostles that there exists an intercommunion between all the children of God, whether triumphant in heaven, or waging the battle for their salvation on earth, or suffering the purging penance of purgatory. Christ is the head and we are the members of His mystical body. By virtue of the communion of saints, the blessed in heaven can pray and intercede before the throne of God both for us and for the souls in Purgatory. We too can offer our prayers and sacrifices for the relief of the souls in purgatory. They in return can pray to God for us who are still members of the Church militant on earth.

The invocation of the saints may be said to follow as a consequence of the general doctrine of the communion of saints. The Church's teaching on the invocation of saints is thus defined by the Council of Trent: "The saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men. It is good and useful supplicantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid and help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son Jesus Christ, who alone is our Redeemer and Saviour. Those persons think impiously who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invoked; who assert that they do not pray for men; who declare that asking them to pray for each of us in particular is idolatry, repugnant to the word of God, and opposed to the honor of the One Mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

The Old and the New Testament clearly teach the prin-

ciple and the practice of asking the prayers of our brethren. Thus God commanded Abimelech to ask Abraham's prayers: "He shall pray for thee and thou shalt live."<sup>1</sup> God hearkened to the prayers of Moses interceding for the sinful children of Israel in the desert.<sup>2</sup> God said to the friends of Job: "My servant Job shall pray for you; his face I will accept."<sup>3</sup> St. Paul writes: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. . . that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."<sup>4</sup> To the Thessalonians he writes: "Brethren, pray for us."

Is it reasonable to suppose that a Christian who while on earth prays for his friends, will cease to remember them or to care for them when he becomes a member of God's family in heaven? Surely his interest instead of waning will increase because he now perceives more clearly the spiritual needs of his friends on earth, and is more capable now as a saint of God of interceding for them. This has been the belief of the Church from the days of the Apostles to the present time. Let St. Jerome (340-420) bear witness to the faith of the early Church: "If Apostles and martyrs", he writes, "while still in the flesh and still needing to care for themselves, can pray for others, how much more will they pray for others after they have won their crowns, their victories, their triumphs. Moses, one man, obtains God's pardon for six hundred thousand armed men, and Stephen prays for his persecutors. When they are with Christ will they be less powerful? St. Paul says that two hundred and seventy-six souls were granted to his prayers, whilst they were in the ship with him. Shall he close his lips after death, and not mutter a syllable for those who throughout the world have believed in his gospel?"<sup>5</sup>

We learn that the angels pray for men from the vision of Zacharias<sup>6</sup> and from the words of the angel Gabriel to Tobias: "When thou didst pray with tears. . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord."<sup>7</sup> That they are interested in our

<sup>1</sup>Gen. 20:7, 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ps. 15:23.

<sup>3</sup>Job 42:8.

<sup>4</sup>Rom. 15:30.

<sup>5</sup>Adv. Vigil, 6.

<sup>6</sup>1:12, 13.

<sup>7</sup>Tob. 12:12.

<sup>1</sup>1Sess. 25.

struggles and rejoice in our victories is stated by Christ Himself; "There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance."<sup>1</sup>

### *Borrowed Light*

A non-Catholic friend once objected to the practice of praying to the saints in these words: "God is our Creator, and Christ is our Redeemer. In praying to the saints, you Catholics dishonor God and make void the mediatorship of Jesus Christ. You put the creature above the Creator and give to a creature the honor that belongs to God alone." This objection assumes that we pray to the saints *independently* of God and of their relationship to Him. If this assumption were true, the objection would be well founded. But such is not the case. The Church teaches on the contrary that God alone is the Source of all blessings and graces, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. She teaches that whatever *influence* the saints possess comes from God and is traceable to their relationship with Him. Just as the moon borrows her light from the sun, so the saints borrow their light from the Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ, whom St. Paul calls "the one mediator of God and men."<sup>2</sup> Hence when we pray to the saints we ask them to aid us through the merits of Jesus Christ, while we beg Christ to assist us through His own merits. So careful is the Church to make this distinction clear to her children that she ends practically every prayer asking the saints to intercede for us and to succor us with the words "through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

A second objection to the invocation of the saints runs thus: Granted that there is no dishonor to God in this practice, the question still remains. Why should we pray to them when we can pray directly to God who can hear and answer us? "If it is vain and useless to pray to the saints because God can hear us," says Cardinal Gibbons in answering this objection, "then Jacob was wrong in praying to the angel; the friends of Job were wrong in asking him to pray for them, though God commanded them to invoke Job's intercession; the Jews exiled in Babylon were wrong in asking their brethren in Jerusalem to pray for them; St. Paul was wrong in beseeching his friends to pray for him; then we are

<sup>1</sup>Luke 15:10.

<sup>2</sup>1 Tim. 2:5.

all wrong in praying for each other. You deem it useful and pious to ask your pastor to pray for you. Is it not, at least equally useful for me to invoke the prayers of St. Paul, since I am convinced that he can hear me?"<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that our prayers to God do not and of course should not decrease because of our prayers to the saints. On the contrary a devotion to the Blessed Virgin or to any of the saints tends inevitably to increase our love of God and quicken our loyalty and reverence for Him. Then too it must be remembered that while the Church declares it is necessary for salvation to pray to God, she merely states that it is "good and useful to invoke the saints, and to have recourse to their prayers, help and assistance, in order to obtain benefits from God through Jesus Christ, who alone is our Redeemer and Saviour."

The practice of praying to the saints has assisted in keeping more vividly in the minds of the faithful the realities of heaven and the rewards bestowed by God upon those who served Him faithfully while on this earth. In a day when heaven is spoken of with hesitation and uncertainty even in Protestant pulpits, the Catholic doctrine of the invocation of saints serves as an anchor to the windward and protects the faithful in their unflinching belief in the teachings of Christ and the Apostles. Heaven is as profound a reality to the Catholic as the earth upon which he lives. The saints and angels, as members of God's heavenly family, are not less real to us than the citizens of our earthly abode.

<sup>1</sup>Gibbons, Faith of Our Fathers, p. 162.

### Discussion Aids

What do you mean by the Communion of Saints? Explain the honoring of the saints and the praying for the souls in purgatory as reasonable devotions? How does the Council of Trent define the teaching on the invocation of saints? Give instances from the Scripture of praying for the brethren. How is the non-Catholic objection that praying to the saints makes void the mediatorship of Jesus Christ to be answered? How answer the objection that we should in all cases go directly to God in prayer? What is the value of praying to the saints for both ourselves and our neighbors?



**Practices:**

Meditate on the doctrine of the Communion of Saints as a fulfillment of the doctrine of the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God.

Always offer your devotion to the saints through Christ our Lord.

Pray to your patron saint for help in the direction of your life.

## Chapter XXXIII

## IMAGES AND RELICS OF SAINTS

*They Are Venerated For What They Represent But Are Not Worshipped*

The Catholic Church condemns the worship of images as idolatry but she sanctions reverence for the pictures and effigies of Christ and the saints. She does this not because of the material of which they are composed but because of what they represent. The notion that a Catholic worships a crucifix or an image of Christ is too absurd for serious refutation. Let a traveler ask the humblest Catholic peasant kneeling before a wayside shrine of the Crucified Christ if he worships the image itself and he will answer that worship is due to God alone. He merely venerates or reverences the crucifix because it represents his Saviour dying upon the Cross.

The Church's teaching is thus-expressed by the Council of Trent: "The images of Christ, and of His Virgin Mother, and of other Saints, are to be had and retained, especially in churches; and a due honor and veneration is to be given to them; not that any divinity or virtue is believed to be in them for which they are to be honored, or that any prayer is to be made to them, or that any confidence is to be placed in them, as was formerly done by the heathens, who placed their hopes in idols; but because the honor which is given them is referred to the originals which they represent, so that by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover our heads or kneel, we adore Christ and venerate His Saints, whose likeness they represent.. . If any abuses have crept in among these holy and salutary observances, the Holy Synod ardently desires that they be utterly abolished."<sup>1</sup>

The Penny Catechism states explicitly: "We should give to relics, crucifixes, and holy pictures an inferior and relative honour, so far as they relate to Christ and His Saints, and

<sup>1</sup> sess. 25.

are memorials of them. We may not pray to relics or images, for they can neither see, nor hear, nor help us." In other words it is strictly forbidden to pray to a statue or a picture. The use that Catholics make of images is therefore precisely the same as civilized nations make of statues and likenesses of their great statesmen and heroes. Where is the city of any considerable size in the world which has not erected effigies of the nation's heroes and benefactors? Walk through the streets of Washington, London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, and thousands of other cities, and you will see numerous monuments erected to their illustrious men, seeking thus to honor them and to enshrine them in the abiding memory of their citizens.

Do we denounce this practice as the worshipping of images and accuse those nations of idolatry? To ask the question is to answer it. Then why should any Protestant feel misgivings when he sees the figure of Christ or of His blessed mother, or of the saints in a Catholic Church? They are there to increase the devotion of the faithful, to arouse in them holy sentiments and aspirations and to remind the faithful to imitate their examples of virtue and holiness of life.

The early Christians adorned their catacombs with frescoes of Christ, and of scenes from the Holy Scriptures. Among the most common were Moses striking the rock, Daniel in the lion's den, the Birth of Christ, the Coming of the Wise Men, the marriage feast of Cana, the raising of Lazarus, and Christ, the Good Shepherd. Statues were uncommon only because they were costly and difficult to make. When the Church emerged from the catacombs, however, she at once proceeded to decorate her churches with mosaics, paintings and sculptures.

#### *Iconoclasm*

It was not until the eighth century that a campaign was waged against images by Leo the Isaurian, Emperor of Constantinople. He ordered the paintings of Christ and His Saints to be torn from the church walls and burned. Invading even the homes of the people, he confiscated their sacred images, causing all effigies of bronze, silver and gold to be melted down and converted into coins, upon which he had his own image stamped. Like Henry VIII and Cromwell he pre-

tended to be moved by a zeal for purity of worship, while avarice was the real motive.

The warfare was continued by Constantine Copronymous, his successor. On one occasion, Stephen, an intrepid monk, held before the Emperor a coin bearing that tyrant's effigy, with the words: "Sire, whose image is this?" "It is mine," answered the Emperor. Whereupon the monk threw down the coin and trampled it. He was seized by the royal attendants and put to a cruel death. "Alas!" cried the holy religious to the Emperor, "if I am punished for dishonoring the image of a mortal monarch, what punishment do they deserve who burn the image of Jesus Christ?"

The destruction of images was revived by Luther and the other Reformers of the sixteenth century. The churches and monasteries were the great museums of the art of the Middle Ages. Many priceless paintings and statues were demolished, frescoed walls were whitewashed, and gorgeous stained glass windows with figures of Christ and the saints were ruthlessly smashed. The iconoclastic campaign was especially vehement in Germany, Holland and the British Isles. A traveler to these countries visiting some of the desecrated Catholic churches which are now being used as Protestant houses of worship can scarcely fail to note the mutilated statues of Christ and the saints still standing in their niches.

They stand as grim reminders of a barbarous and fanatical warfare against religious memorials, which was not only a grievous sacrilege but an outrage against the fine arts as well. If the senseless outbursts had extended into Italy, France and Spain, some of the most priceless treasures of art would have been lost forever to the race. It is significant to note that the Lutheran and Tudor princes who encouraged the campaign of pillage had no qualms against confiscating the gold and silver vessels encrusted with precious gems.

"It has always seemed strange to me," says John L. Stoddard, "that Protestants use so sparingly those handmaids of religion—painting and sculpture. Formerly, indeed, their prejudice against all symbols of Christianity was so intense that they not only stripped old churches, monasteries and cathedrals of their crosses, crucifixes, statues of the Apostles, and pictures of the Blessed Virgin, but actually

mutilated sculptured carvings over the portals of the noblest sanctuaries, struck off the noses from the statues of bishops on their tombs, and whitewashed frescoes of religious subjects upon cloister walls. Even in our own times some Protestants have thought it consonant with the worship of God to make the walls of their churches as bare and unattractive as possible. Most of them even now will not erect a cross on their church steeples, and those who do concede to this pathetic symbol of Christ's Passion a place upon the altar, will not permit the figure of the Crucified to hang upon it!

He then proceeds to seek the cause of this strange hostility. "What is the cause," he asks, "of this aversion to the image of our Lord in those who claim to love Him, and who sing such hymns as 'In the Cross of Christ I glory,' and 'When I survey the wondrous Cross, on which the Prince of Glory died'? Does it not lie in an unreasonable hatred of the Catholic Church, which has for ages held this symbol as the most sacred object in the world? When people tell me that such memorials are unnecessary, they speak the truth perhaps so far as they themselves are concerned, but they assuredly cannot speak for all. Many there are who find such things a blessing. It is a matter of feeling and association, rather than of intellect. I, for example, though an educated man, and having attained an age when life is seldom influenced by sentimental emotions, confess to a feeling of genuine pleasure in seeing near me, when in church or in my home, some beautiful memento of the Son of God, or of His Mother, or the Saints. I do not pray to them, of course, yet often during prayer or religious meditation I love to turn my gaze to them, as aids to a devotional frame of mind."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Intention Is Decisive*

In walking through Westminster Abbey, which was once a Catholic Church but is now used as a Protestant church, I saw monuments and statues everywhere. They commemorate the illustrious men and women of England who are buried there. Suppose I were to address myself thus to a English-Protestant worshipping in this historic shrine. "Why your church is filled with statues. Are you not guilty of idolatry?" "Not at all," he would reply, "I do not adore or worship the statues; they are simply memorials." So, too,

<sup>1</sup>Stoddard, *Rebuilding a Lost Faith*, p. 199.

it is with Catholics. Statues and images in our Churches are memorials, not to secular heroes, but to Christ and the saints.

The intention in the mind of the worshipper is all important, as Cardinal Gibbons was fond of illustrating with the following story. An English parson once remarked to a Catholic friend: "Tom, don't you pray to images?" "We pray before them," replied Tom; "but we have no intention of praying to them." "Who cares for your intention," retorted the parson. "Don't you pray at night?" observed Tom. "Yes," said the parson; "I pray at my bed." "Yes; you pray to the bed-post." "Oh, no!" said the reverend gentleman; "I have no intention of doing that." "Who cares," replied Tom, "for your intention."<sup>1</sup>

After the dedication of our beautiful new church at the campus of the University of Illinois, I invited the members of the University Senate, consisting of about 150 professors, and their wives to the Church where I explained to them its art and the symbolism of its sacramentals. As educators they were deeply impressed by the generous use which the Church makes of pictures, mosaics, sculptures, and effigies in the stained glass windows to vivify the faith and enrich the devotion of her people. Wherever their gaze turned, there was some beautiful sacramental to arrest the attention and turn it to thoughts of God and members of His heavenly family.

"So numerous," observed a professor of educational psychology, as he pointed to the altar with its Calvary group, surmounted by a canopy depicting the scene of the Last Supper, to the Stations of the Cross and to the numerous paintings and sculptured effigies, "are the stimuli to devotion that it should be difficult for a person to think of ought but holy subjects while in this church. Everything that architecture, painting and sculpture can do to interpret religion in terms of beauty and to stir the mind of the worshipper to a vivid realization of Christ's redeeming love for man, has been done. It is an object lesson in the art of reaching the mind through the gateways of the senses. The Catholic Church appeals not only to the ear through the spoken word from the pulpit but she quickens the mind with imagery obtained

<sup>1</sup>Gibbons, *Faith of Our Fathers*, pp. 201, 202.



through the eyes, which is usually the richest in content and remains the longest in memory."

### *Exiling Beauty*

Not less significant was the reaction of a Professor of English literature. "Father," he said, "I was born of Protestant parents and brought up in a town in New England where something of the Puritanical spirit of the Colonists still held sway. I may be said to be, therefore, a dyed-in-the-wool Protestant. But I can see now that the Reformers of the sixteenth century made a great mistake when they demolished statues, destroyed paintings, and exiled beauty from our churches. They have reduced them to buildings with four plain walls and an empty pulpit, thus identifying religion with drab ugliness. I hope that it will not be long until we return to the authentic Christian viewpoint which prevailed up to the Reformation, and which regards all beauty as mirroring the God of beauty, holiness and love. Art should be the handmaid of religion, achieving its highest purpose when it lifts the mind of the creature to the contemplation of the Eternal."

While the great masterpieces of painting and of sculpture have been brought into existence under the inspiration of the religious motive, and adorn our massive cathedrals, we must not minimize the influence of the simpler and less pretentious paintings and statues that adorn the churches of the humble poor. They speak to them in a language which they understand and stir their piety not less effectively than the more artistic works which appeal to the cultured worshipper and the aesthete in our great cathedrals. No one who has entered an adobe chapel in New Mexico and observed Indians at prayer before an altar abounding in the vivid paintings of the suffering Christ, which would not meet the canons of great art, or who has seen the devotion of a Tyrolean peasant kneeling before a wayside shrine with its hand-carved crucifix, can doubt the influence of even the simplest and the humblest representations to kindle the religious fervor of the worshipper.

The Catholic Church is the religious home of the cultured savant and the untutored peasant, of the rich and of the poor. In her mighty family of four hundred and thirty million children are found all the types and temperaments of

the race. Far from looking with disdain upon the lowly poor, she seeks to embellish the commonplaces of their lives, to weave through the drab monotony of their daily routine threads of color and to quicken their imagination with visions of beauty. The memories of paintings and images which they have gazed upon with awe and reverence from their tenderest years often remain with them to the end, exercising a profound influence upon their character.

Perhaps no writer has pointed out with greater penetration the far-reaching character of this influence than the English historian, Lecky: "Associated with the fondest recollections of his childhood," he writes, "and with the music of the church bells. . . painted over the altar where he received the companion of his life, around the cemetery where so many he loved are laid, on the stations of the mountains, on the portal of the vineyard, on the chapel where the storm-tossed mariner fulfils his grateful vows, keeping guard over his cottage door, and looking down upon his humble bed, forms of tender beauty and gentle pathos forever haunt the poor man's fancy, and silently win their way into the very depths of his being. More than any spoken eloquence, more than any dogmatic teaching, they transform and subdue his character, till he learns to realise the sanctity of weakness and suffering, the supreme majesty of compassion and gentleness."<sup>1</sup>

In closing this treatment of the veneration of images, a word about the use of *relics* may be appropriate. The Council of Trent teaches "that the holy bodies of holy martyrs and others now living with Christ—which bodies were the living members of Christ and the temples of the Holy Ghost—and which are by Him to be raised to eternal life and to be glorified, are to be venerated by the faithful; for through these bodies many benefits are bestowed by God on men, so that they who affirm that veneration and honor are not due to the relics of the saints, or that these and other sacred monuments are uselessly honored by the faithful, and that the places dedicated to the memory of the saints are in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid, are wholly to be condemned."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>History of European Morals, vol. 2, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup>Sess. 25.

Contrary to the impression of many non-Catholics, the Church does not ascribe any magical virtue or curative powers to the relic itself. She merely states, in accordance with the Scriptures, that relics are sometimes the occasion of God's miracles. The Scriptures record the incident of a woman who was cured by touching the hem of our Lord's garments,<sup>1</sup> of the sick healed by the shadow of St. Peter<sup>2</sup> and of the handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched the body of St. Paul.<sup>3</sup>

The reverence for Christian relics is as old as Christianity itself. Back in the second century we find that the disciples of Polycarp who had been burned at the stake "took up his bones, which were more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold, and laid them in a suitable place, where the Lord allows us to assemble in gladness and joy to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom."<sup>4</sup> Writing in the fourth century, St. Jerome thus refuted the charge of idolatry or "cinder-worshipping": "We do not worship, we do not adore, we do not bow down before the creature rather than to the Creator, but we venerate the relics of the martyrs in order the better to adore Him whose martyrs they are."<sup>5</sup>

The spirit that prompts a son to treasure carefully a lock of his mother's hair, that moves the American people to treasure the Liberty Bell and to lay wreaths on the grave of Washington at Mt. Vernon and on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington has ever prompted the Christian people to venerate the relics of the saints of God. Failure to do so would indicate a lack of respect not only for the saints, but also for Almighty God whose faithful servants they were and on account of Whom we honor them.

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 9:20, 21.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 5:15, 16.

<sup>3</sup>Acts 19:12.

<sup>4</sup>Mart. Poly.

<sup>5</sup>Ad Raptium, 2.

### Discussion Aids

Why does the Church sanction the giving of reverence to images and relics of saints? What is the teaching of the Council of Trent on the doctrine? Give the catechism definition of the doctrine. Do we honor images of our national heroes? Is this practice idolatry? What was the practice of early Christians in the catacombs in the matter of sacred pictures, etc? Give a brief history of the campaign against images. Quote John L. Stoddard on this doctrine; Cardinal Gibbons; the historian, Lecky. What is the teaching of the Church on relics? Show the reasonableness of this teaching from instances in our daily life.

#### *Practices:*

Have the crucifix and pictures of Our Lord and the saints in places of honor in your home.

Be enrolled in the scapular and wear a scapular medal as a reminder that it is the livery of Our Lady.

Have a medal of St. Christopher in your automobile and *pray to the saint* for protection.

## Chapter XXXIV

### PURGATORY AND PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

#### *Basis of Devotion Traced Through Scripture, Tradition And Reason*

"Why do Catholics pray for the dead?" is a question frequently asked by our non-Catholic fellow citizens. Since the practice of praying for the souls of the deceased is based upon the doctrine of purgatory which was abandoned by the Reformers in the sixteenth century, and is now practically unknown among their followers, the latter are naturally at a loss to understand the Catholic custom of praying for their departed brethren, or as it is commonly called "the devotion to the poor souls." The Church keeps this devotion before the eyes of her children by setting aside the second of November as All Souls' Day, permitting her priests to celebrate three Masses on that day for the souls of the departed, and by designating the entire month of November as the month of special devotion for the poor souls. Let us invite our non-Catholic friends to investigate with us the basis of this devotion in Scripture, tradition and in reason.

#### *Purgatory and Prayers for the Dead*

The Scriptures encourage us to pray not only for one another on earth, and to invoke the intercession of the saints and angels, but they encourage us to pray for the souls of our deceased brethren as well. In the second Book of Machabees it is narrated that after Judas had defeated Gorgias, he came with his company to bury the Jews slain in the battle. "Making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead." He did not regard their sins to be grievous, "because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them." The sacred writer then expresses the doctrine involved herein: "It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."<sup>1</sup>



While our dissenting brethren do not acknowledge the Books of Machabees to be inspired, they must at least admit them to be faithful historical records that bear witness to the Jewish faith centuries before Christ. As a matter of fact, they rest upon the same authority as Isaiah, St. John and all the other books in the Bible—the infallible teaching authority of the Church which has declared all the books in the Bible to be inspired.

Our Saviour speaks of the forgiveness of sins in "The world to come"<sup>1</sup> which refers to Purgatory according to St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great. In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul tells us that "every man's work shall be manifest" on the Lord's day. "The fire" he continues, "shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide," that is, if his works are righteous, "he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn" this is, if his works are faulty and imperfect, "he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."<sup>2</sup> In these words St. Paul tells us that the soul of such a man will ultimately be saved, though he will suffer for a time the purifying flames of Purgatory.

This is the unanimous interpretation of the Fathers of the early Church and the continuing tradition of the intervening centuries. It speaks to us from the tombs of the martyrs and from the catacombs where lie the bodies of the early Christians. In going through the catacombs of St. Calixtus under the plain of the Roman campagna outside the walls of Rome, the writer saw a number of inscriptions echoing still the last words of the dying Christians: "In your prayers remember us who have gone before you." "Mayest thou have eternal light in Christ", was the answering prayer of those who remained behind. "Inscriptions such as these," reports Monsignor Barnes, "are found upon the tombs of many Christians in the first three centuries."<sup>3</sup>

This Apostolic custom of praying for the dead is frequently referred to in the writings of the Fathers of both the East and West. Tertullian (160-240) in two different passages speaks of anniversary Masses: "We make on one day

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 12:32.

<sup>2</sup>1 Cor. 3:13-15.

<sup>3</sup>The Early Church in the Light of the Monuments, 149-157.

every year oblations for the dead, as for their birthdays."<sup>1</sup>  
 "The faithful widow prays for the soul of her husband, and begs for him in the interim repose, and participation in the first resurrection, and offers prayers on the anniversary of his death."<sup>2</sup>

In his funeral sermon over the Emperor Theodosius, St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, said: "Give perfect rest to Thy servant Theodosius, that rest which Thou has prepared for Thy saints. . . I have loved him, and therefore will I follow him unto the land of the living; nor will I leave him until by tears and prayers I shall lead him whither his merits summon him, unto the holy mountain of the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

One of the most touching incidents which have come down to us from the writings of the Fathers upon this subject is from the pen of St. Augustine, who lived in the beginning of the fifth century. This scholarly Bishop relates that when his mother was dying, she made this last request of him: "Lay this body anywhere; let not the care of it in any way disturb you. This only I request of you, that you would remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you be."<sup>4</sup> The memory of that request drew from her son this fervent prayer: "I, therefore, O God of my heart, do now beseech Thee for the sins of my mother. Hear me through the medicine of the wounds that hung upon the wood. . . May she, then, be in peace with her husband. . . And inspire, my Lord . . . thy servants, my brethren, whom with voice and heart, and pen I serve, that as many as shall read these words may remember at Thy Altar, Monica, Thy servant. . ."<sup>5</sup> In this incident there is reflected the universal custom of the early Church of praying for the dead as well as her belief in a state called *purgatory*.

The custom of offering prayers and sacrifice for the souls of their departed relatives and friends was deeply rooted among the ancient Jews and in spite of all their dispersions and wanderings has continued down to the present day. Some years ago the writer observed great numbers of them praying for their deceased at the famous Wailing Wall

<sup>1</sup>De Cor. Mil., 8.

<sup>2</sup>De Monag., 10.

<sup>3</sup>De Obitu. Theod., 86, 87.

<sup>4</sup>Confessions, Book 9.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

in Jerusalem. An authorized prayer-book in common use among the Hebrews in our country contains the following formula of prayers prescribed for funerals:

"Departed brother! mayest thou find open the gates of heaven, and see the city of peace and the dwellings of safety, and meet the ministering angels hastening joyfully toward thee. And may the High Priest stand to receive thee, and go thou to the end, rest in peace, and rise again into life. May the repose established in the celestial abode. . . be the lot, dwelling and the resting-place of the soul of our deceased brother (whom the Spirit of the Lord may guide into Paradise), who departed from this world, according to the will of God, the Lord of heaven and earth. May the supreme King of kings, through His infinite mercy, hide him under the shadow of His wing. May He raise him at the end of his days and cause him to drink of the stream of His delights."<sup>1</sup>

"It is indeed strange," observes Father B. L. Conway, C. S. P., "that the Reformers should set aside such a body of testimony, both in Scripture and tradition, for Purgatory and prayers for the dead. But doctrine is so interwoven with doctrine in the consistent Gospel of Jesus Christ, that the denial of one central dogma logically means the denial of many others. Luther's false theory of justification by faith alone led him to deny the distinction between mortal and venial sin, the fact of temporal punishment, the necessity of good works, the efficacy of indulgences, and the usefulness of prayers for the dead. If sin is not remitted, but only covered; if the 'new man' of the Gospel is Christ imputing His own justice to the still sinful man, it would indeed be useless to pray for the dead that they be loosed from their sins. Luther's denial of Purgatory implied either the cruel doctrine that the greater number of even devout Christians were lost, which accounts in some measure for the modern denial of eternal punishment, or the unwarranted assumption that God by 'some sudden, magical change' purifies the soul at the instant of death."<sup>2</sup>

While the word *purgatory* does not occur in Scripture, the reality which it symbolizes is referred to both in the Old

<sup>1</sup>Jewish Prayer Book. Edited by Isaac Leeser, pub. by Slatk & Mooney, Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup>The Question Box, 395, 396.

and the New Testament and in the writing of the Fathers in the East and in the West. Since the belief in the efficacy of prayers for the dead was universal in the infant Church, it follows that the belief in purgatory was likewise universal. For without a purgatory, prayers for the dead would be meaningless.

#### *Purgatory—A Demand of Reason*

Entirely aside, however, from the evidence offered by Scripture and tradition, reason alone would suggest and even demand the existence of a midway state between heaven and hell. Since "nothing defiled can enter heaven", it follows that a soul departing this life with either venial sin or with temporal punishment still to be suffered, could not enter heaven. It could not in justice be sent to hell which is everlasting, as such a punishment would be out of all proportion to the offense committed. It is entirely probable that vast numbers of people die with venial sin upon their souls. They are not worthy to enter at once into heaven. They cannot in justice be doomed to hell. There must, therefore, be another state where the punishment is suited to the offense. Such is the imperative dictate of reason. That state which reason thus demands is *purgatory*, where they are cleansed of their venial imperfections and rendered suitable to enter into the august presence of their Lord and Creator in the unspeakable happiness of heaven.

The custom of praying for the souls of our departed friends is not only conformable to Holy Scripture, but is prompted by the instincts of our nature. The doctrine of the communion of saints emphasizes the social and spiritual solidarity of our race by showing how we can help one another in time of need. It goes a long way to rob death of its terrors. In denying this doctrine the Reformers of the sixteenth century did violence not only to the Scriptures and the unbroken tradition of the Christian Church for sixteen centuries, but they halted and jarred also the instincts of our nature and the craving of our hearts. They severed those tender and sacred ties which bind earth with heaven—the soul in the flesh with the soul released from its fleshy tabernacle.

If I may pray for my brother on this earth why may I not continue to pray for him when he has crossed the border-

line into eternity? Does not death destroy merely the body, leaving the soul unscathed? Does he not, therefore, still live and think and remember and love? What earthly reason is there then why I should not continue to remember him in my prayers and prove my love for him not by unavailing tears but by the more potent means of my petitions in his behalf addressed to the God of mercy and compassion? What Christian is there who can stand at the open grave and see the body of a loved one being lowered to its resting place without lifting tear-dimmed eyes to heaven with the cry: "O God, have mercy upon the soul of my beloved!"

Regardless of the silence of his Protestant creed upon the efficacy of prayers for the dead, he hearkens to the voice of his heart and responds in that universal language of love and sympathy which all mankind understands. From the mute lips of his deceased friend he hears again the same plea as that uttered by Job in his adversity: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me!" That such an appeal does not fall upon deaf ears is an evidence that the human heart has not allowed religious prejudice to rob it of its love and sympathy. Of souls which have passed beyond the border into eternity and plead to us from purgatory for a remembrance in our prayers we can truly say: "They pass beyond our touch, beyond our sight; never, thank God, beyond our love and prayers."

Out of his long experience of more than fifty years in the ministry, Cardinal Gibbons narrates an incident which illustrates this point: "I have seen," he relates, "a devoted daughter minister with tender solicitude at the sick-bed of a fond parent. Many an anxious day and sleepless night did she watch at his bedside. She moistened the parched lips, and cooled the fevered brow, and raised the drooping head on its pillow. Every change in her patient for better or worse brought a corresponding sunshine or gloom to her heart. It was filial love that prompted all this. Her father died and she followed his remains to the grave. Though not a Catholic, standing by the bier she burst those chains which a cruel religious prejudice had wrought around her heart, and, rising superior to her sect, she cried out: 'Lord, have mercy



on his soul.' It was the voice of nature and of religion."<sup>1</sup>

Tennyson reflects alike the Christian tradition and the natural yearning of the human heart when he makes his hero, the dying King Arthur thus address his surviving comrade, Sir Bedivere:

"I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
May He within Himself make pure; but thou,  
If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day."

#### *An Appealing Doctrine*

When John L. Stoddard was groping in the mists of uncertainty for the sure light of religious truth, he received a letter from a Catholic friend calling his attention to the beauty and reasonableness of the Church's teaching on purgatory. The letter which proved so illuminating and helpful to Stoddard states the case with admirable lucidity as follows: "There is hardly a religious system of antiquity in which some similar provision (to Purgatory) is not found. It was left for the 'Reformers' of the sixteenth century to reject this immemorial dogma of the Church. When they denied the sanctity of the Mass and many other sacramental features of Catholicism, the doctrine of Purgatory went with the rest. If the souls of the dead pass instantly into an eternally fixed state, beyond the efficacy of our intercessions, then all our requiems, prayers and similar practices are vain. But if, on the contrary, we believe in the Communion of Saints, that is, in the intercommunion of the three-fold Church, militant on earth, suffering in Purgatory, and triumphant in Heaven, then we on earth can influence, and be influenced by, the souls who have crossed the border. Few, indeed, quit this life in a state of purity and grace which warrants their immediate entrance into Heaven. Still fewer, let us hope, are those to whom the blessed refuge of Purgatory, that half-way house of our dead, is closed. I cannot conceive how Protestants can believe as they do on this point, nor is it astonishing that their rejection of Purgatory has been followed, in the case of many, by the elimination of a belief in Hell; for

<sup>1</sup>Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 224.

the latter doctrine, taken alone, is monstrous. In fact, all Catholic doctrines are interdependent; they stand or fall together. You cannot pick stones out of the arch, and expect it to stand, for it will not do so. Purgatory is one of the most humane and beautiful conceptions imaginable. How many mothers' aching hearts has it not soothed and comforted with hope for some dead, wayward son!"<sup>1</sup>

After his conversion Stoddard wrote the story of his religious wanderings in *Rebuilding a Lost Faith*, in which he thus sets forth the reasonableness of this doctrine which made so powerful an appeal to him: "The doctrine of the Catholic Church in reference to Purgatory states that there is such a place, in which souls suffer for a time, before they can be admitted to the joys of Heaven, because they still need to be cleansed from certain venial sins, infirmities and faults, or still have to discharge the *temporal* punishment due to mortal sins, which is as yet uncanceled, though the *lasting* punishment of those sins has been forgiven and removed through Christ's atonement. Furthermore, the Church declares, that by our prayers and by the acceptable sacrifice of the Mass we may still help those souls, through the merits of Christ. Beyond this statement the Church's formal doctrine does not go; but it is *not* an article of Catholic faith that there is in Purgatory any material fire. It is generally believed that souls in Purgatory suffer spiritual anguish from the fact that they then feel acutely, as they could not do on earth, the perfect happiness from which they are for a time excluded, while they must also understand the enormity of the sins which they committed against their Heavenly Father and their Saviour."<sup>2</sup>

I have met many Protestants who though they have no doctrine of purgatory in their official creed, acknowledge that they often remember their deceased loved ones in their prayers. I remember a devout Protestant woman who stated that she prayed each day for her son who was killed in an automobile accident a few days after his graduation from the University. Though she had never read a line of St. Augustine, and probably never had heard even his name, yet out of the unquenchable yearning of her heart and the in-

<sup>1</sup>Stoddard, *Rebuilding a Lost Faith*, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 156.

eradicable instincts of her human nature, she knew his teaching, that "there are some who have departed this life, not so bad as to be deemed unworthy of mercy, nor so good as to be entitled to immediate happiness."<sup>1</sup>

In constantly increasing numbers our separated brethren are coming to recognize both the reasonableness and the authentic character, in the light of the teachings of Christ and of the Apostles, of the doctrine of purgatory. As Mallock well observes: "It is becoming fast recognized that it is the only doctrine that can bring a belief in future rewards and punishments into anything like accordance with our notions of what is just and reasonable. So far from its being a superfluous superstition, it is seen to be just what is demanded at once by reason and morality; and a belief in it is not an intellectual assent only, but a partial harmonizing of the whole moral ideal."<sup>2</sup> In short, the doctrine of purgatory answers the demand of reason, harmonizes with the instinctive yearnings of our nature, and reflects the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.

<sup>1</sup>De Civ. Dei, 21:24.

<sup>2</sup>Is Life Worth Living? p. 290.

### Discussion Aids

How should you answer the question of a non-Catholic, "Why do Catholics pray for the dead?" What scriptural references sustain the doctrine? What testimony to the doctrine is found in the catacombs? In the Church Fathers? What was the practice in this matter among the ancient Jews? The modern Jews? What action did the Reformers take on this doctrine? Is the word *purgatory* found in Scripture? Is the reality symbolized by that word found in Scripture? Give examples. How is purgatory a demand of reason? Quote Cardinal Gibbons, Alfred Tennyson, John L. Stoddard and the author Mallock on the reasonableness of the doctrine.

### Practices:

Have Masses said for your departed ones.

Include in your grace after meals the prayer for the faithful departed.

Include your departed ones in your daily prayers.

## Chapter XXXV

### THE WAY OF THE CROSS

#### *Best Form of Meditation on Sufferings and Death of Our Saviour*

The places where Christ was born, lived and died have always been dear to the hearts of the Christian world. They are redolent with the memories of the Saviour. Especially sacred in the eyes of Christians is that stretch of ground over which Christ bore His cross on the journey to Calvary. In the early ages vast multitudes of Christians made pilgrimages across Europe over into Asia to visit these sacred places. There they meditated on His sufferings and walked in His footsteps to Calvary.

When the Holy Land fell into the possession of the Mohammedans, pilgrimages to Jerusalem became hazardous. There was danger from the despotic government and from the savage fanaticism of the people. The idea therefore occurred to pious pilgrims who had previously made the journey to Palestine to erect representations of scenes in Christ's journey to Golgotha. They would assist meditation by presenting the sufferings of the Saviour in a vivid, realistic manner.

In the early part of the fifteenth century, Blessed Al-berez, a pious Dominican who had visited the Holy Land erected in Córdoba, Spain, a series of little chapels, each of which contained a painting of one of the principal scenes in the passion of Christ. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries reproductions of the sufferings of Christ carrying His cross to Calvary were erected in various countries of Europe. The devotion made an instant appeal to the hearts of Christians. At first the number of stations varied. In some places there were erected ten stations; in others twelve, fourteen, twenty, and even more. For the sake of uniformity the Church has specified fourteen as the number of stations to be erected in all the churches of the world.

Some of the scenes depicted in the stations are contained in the Gospels. There are others which are not mentioned in Scripture but which have come down to us through an oral tradition from the first century. Thus there is no scriptural authority for the three falls of Christ under the Cross, nor for the touching story of Veronica wiping the face of Jesus. They are traceable to that body of unwritten testimony that dates from apostolic times.

In 1694 Pope Innocent XII declared that the same indulgences formerly gained by a visit to the holy places in Palestine could now be secured by all Franciscans and those affiliated with the Order who devoutly made the Way of the Cross. Shortly afterwards Pope Benedict XIII extended these indulgences to all the faithful. The indulgences are very great. The learned theologian, Father Alston says: "It may be safely asserted that there is no devotion more richly endowed with indulgences than the Way of the Cross and none which enables us more literally to obey Christ's injunction to 'take up our cross and follow Him.'" In 1931 Pope Pius XI abolished all previous indulgences and granted these:

1. A plenary indulgence as often as the Way of the Cross is made.
2. A plenary indulgence for all who (a) make the Way of the Cross on a day on which they receive Holy Communion, and (b) for those who have made the Stations ten times and within a month receive Holy Communion.
3. A partial indulgence of ten years and ten quarantines for every Station made if the Way of the Cross is not completed.

#### *The Method of Making the Stations*

How are the stations to be made in order to gain the indulgences? What prayers are to be said? Strictly speaking there are no prescribed prayers. All that is necessary is that the person walk around the Stations meditating upon the sufferings of Christ, preferably as depicted in each of the Stations, or at least upon the sufferings of Christ in general. Prayer books are helpful for the beginner in suggesting suitable reflections for each Station. It is well also to say some brief oral prayer such as a Hail Mary and a brief expression of love and contrition at each Station, such as:

"My Jesus, I love Thee more than myself. Grant that I may love Thee always and never offend Thee again." After one has become familiar with the devotion he will be able to make the Stations in a brief time, from five to ten minutes.

Persons who are at sea or sick or are unable for various reasons to go to the church may gain the indulgences by holding in the hand a crucifix specially blessed for this devotion and reciting the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* once for each of the fourteen Stations, then the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* and *Gloria* five times, followed by one *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* and *Gloria*, for the intentions of our Holy Father. These indulgences may be applied either to one's own soul or to the souls in purgatory. Thus does our tender Mother, the Holy Church, temper her laws to the weakness of her children, allowing us now to gain indulgences which were formerly secured only by long, arduous pilgrimages to the Holy Lands made in the face of dangers, privations and many hardships.

What values other than the indulgences are to be derived from this devotion? What spiritual fruits are gained? Spiritual writers tell us that there is no subject upon which meditation is so wholesome and salutary for the soul as upon the sufferings of Christ. This would seem to be confirmed by an incident narrated in the life of St. Bridget. Christ once appeared to her with blood streaming from all the wounds in His hands and feet and side. When asked what had reduced Him to this pitiable condition, our Divine Saviour answered: "It is the doing of those who never consider the great love I manifest for them by all I suffered for them on the cross." It was as a perpetuation of His Passion that our Holy Redeemer instituted the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, placing ever before us in vivid drama the story of His sufferings.

To suffer and to sacrifice for others and then to receive from them no acknowledgment—that is painful indeed. Parents and others who have toiled and sacrificed only to be repaid by ingratitude know how sharp a pang it is. Shakespeare reflects the experience of the ages when he exclaims: "Sharper than a serpent's tongue is base ingratitude."

#### *A Powerful Remedy*

In the Way of the Cross we have the antidote that will calm and still our passions. A man once said to a holy priest:



"Father, I have an ungovernable temper. I fly into an angry rage at the slightest provocation." "Go," said the priest, "and make every day the Way of the Cross. When you come to the twelfth station showing Jesus dying on the Cross in the most excruciating torment with a prayer of forgiveness for His executioners on His lips, linger a little longer. See if in the face of such patience and forbearance you can find it in you ever to grow angry or to blaspheme." The man did so and found that the thought of Christ dying on the Cross for his sins smothered in its very beginnings the tendency to anger and to curse. The Way of the Cross is a literal fulfillment of Christ's injunction: "If anyone will be My disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me."

Some years ago I made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in Old St. Mary's Church in the business district of Chicago. It was evening. Men and women of all classes on their way home from work were dropping in for a visit to their Eucharistic Lord. As I glanced up from my prayers my eyes fell upon the countenance of a man making the Way of the Cross. I recognized him as a distinguished jurist, a judge of the Superior Court, universally known and loved. I told him when he came out how edified I was at seeing him, despite the pressure of a multitude of legal duties, find time for this beautiful devotion. "Father," he said, "after a busy day at court, after listening to lawyers haranguing and arguing and trying one's patience, I find comfort and peace of mind in making the Way of the Cross."

The Way of the Cross is the antidote for the passion of anger, the counteractive of lust, the prophylactic for vice and sin. Make the Way of the Cross daily if possible, or at least weekly. You will then experience the profound truth of those words of the great philosopher of the human heart, Thomas a Kempis in the *Following Of Christ*: "For there is no other way unto life and unto true inward peace, but the Way of the Cross and of daily mortification. Go where thou wilt, seek whatsoever thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above nor a safer way below than the Way of the Holy Cross."

### Discussion Aids

Where are the original stations of the Cross? Where and when did Blessed Alberez erect stations? In what centuries were stations erected in various countries of Europe? Was the number always fourteen? Is there scriptural authority for all the scenes depicted in the stations? What indulgences were granted by Pope Innocent XII? By Pope Benedict XIII? What are the indulgences now granted? By what Pope were they granted? How does one make the stations? What value other than the indulgences are to be derived from this devotion?

#### Practices:

Practice the devotion of the Way of the Cross as an antidote for the vice or fault you are trying to eradicate from your life.

Say the stations for the peace of the world.

Say the stations as part of your preparation for confession.

## Chapter XXXVI

## THE SACRED HEART: WHY HONOR IT?

*The Origin and Development of a World-wide Devotion*

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of the distinctive characteristics of the Catholic religion. It is universal throughout the Catholic world, but is found in no other faith. The story of its origin and growth shows the living character of Catholic worship, which enables mankind in every age to manifest in ways that appeal most deeply to the human heart, their love and reverence for their divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us first glance at the true nature of this devotion and then review the historical incidents responsible for its propagation.

Is it true that this devotion focuses attention upon the heart as a mere physiological organ of our Lord's body, as some non-Catholics imagine? Not at all. "Devotion to the Heart of Jesus alone, as to a noble part of His Divine Body," as Father Jean Bainvel, Professor at the Institute Catholique in Paris points out, "would not be devotion to the Sacred Heart as understood and approved by the Catholic Church." As a matter of fact, this devotion is but a special form of devotion to Jesus, especially to His love for mankind, of which His Heart is the symbol.

In language, sculpture and painting the heart is used as a symbol of love and affection. It is appropriate, therefore, that in speaking of the all-embracing love of Christ, a love that prompted Him to lay down His life on Calvary's Cross, we should speak of His merciful and loving Heart. Whether or not the heart be the true physiological seat of love has nothing to do with the legitimacy of the Church's use of the heart as the symbol of that emotion. The sanction for such practice is derived not from the researches of physiologists but from current usage and social convention.

*Powerful Means*

Devotion to the Sacred Heart embraces, therefore, the whole character and personality of Christ, the Son of the

eternal God. His bleeding Heart is the emblem of a love that suffered for us even unto death. Father Bainvel gives the following clear and admirable statement of the object of this devotion: "Jesus, the living apparition of the goodness of God and of His paternal love, Jesus infinitely loving and amiable, studied in the principal manifestations of His love, is the object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, as indeed He is the object of the Christian religion." From the above explanation, then, it is abundantly clear that no person who really believes in Jesus Christ as the God incarnate Who died for the redemption of mankind upon Calvary's gibbet can object to the reasonableness or the propriety of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The simple fact is that this devotion has been a powerful means of deepening and intensifying the love of the faithful for Almighty God as well as for His Divine Son, our Saviour. It has caused the fountains of human love to rise so high as to flow over beyond the immediate object of its affection, to the love of the Triune God and the love of all His children. It has served to quicken in man the love that pours itself out in sacrificial devotion and unselfish service for humanity. It has engendered the love spoken of by St. John, when he said: "My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth."

From the time of St. John and St. Paul, both of whom placed such marked emphasis on Christ's redeeming love, there has always been in the Church something like devotion to the love of God, Who so loved the world as to give it His only-begotten Son, and to the love of Jesus, Who gave His life for our salvation. Strictly speaking, however, this is not devotion to the Sacred Heart, since it pays no homage to the Heart of Christ as the symbol of His love for us. Indeed, there is no historical evidence of any special devotion to the Sacred Heart during the first ten centuries. It is only in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that we discover the first unmistakable indications of such a devotion. Through the wound in the side of Christ, which had long been a subject of meditation for devout souls, the wounded Heart was gradually reached. The wound in the Heart came to symbolize the wound of love.

<sup>1</sup> John 3:18.

*Origin of Devotion*

It seems probable that devotion to the Sacred Heart first arose in Benedictine or Cistercian monasteries, though it is impossible to name its first votaries. The vision of St. Gertrude on the feast of St. John the Evangelist gave added momentum to its spread in the latter half of the thirteenth century. Permitted to rest her head near the wound in the Saviour's side, she heard the throbbing of the divine Heart. She asked St. John, the beloved disciple of our Lord, if at the Last Supper when he, too, was permitted to lean his head on the Master's bosom, he had felt these pulsations, and why he had never mentioned this fact. St. John answered that this revelation had been reserved for later centuries when the world, having grown cold, would have greater need for it to rekindle its love.<sup>1</sup>

From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century the devotion was practiced by many devout souls, especially in the different religious congregations. The devotion to the Five Wounds, in which the wound in the Heart figured most prominently, served indirectly to help propagate the separate devotion to the Sacred Heart. It was reserved, however, for St. John Eudes<sup>2</sup> to make the devotion which had been hitherto an individual or at least a private one, a public one and to honor it with an Office and to establish a feast for it. On August 21, 1670, the first feast of the Sacred Heart was celebrated with great solemnity and rejoicing at the Grand Seminary of Rennes in France. The time was now ripe for the spread of this devotion throughout the whole of Christendom.

Who was to be the agent that would be chosen by the Most High for this special mission? "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He might confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He might confound the strong."<sup>3</sup> Just as Christ chose the lowly and untutored fishermen as the human instruments for the world-wide spread of His religion, so here also He selected one of the lowliest and most obscure of His spiritual children. As in the thirteenth century Almighty God chose a humble and obscure nun in a convent at Liège, named Juli-

<sup>1</sup>Revelationes Gertrudianae, ed. Poitiers and Paris, 1877.

<sup>2</sup>1601-1680.

<sup>3</sup>1 Cor. 1:27.

ana, to be the means of inaugurating the celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi, rather than the saintly Louis IX, king of France, or the prince of theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas, so for the institution and propagation of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus, He did not select the holy Doctor of the Church, St. Francis de Sales, but the poorest and humblest of His spiritual daughters in the Order of the Visitation, Margaret Mary Alacoque, in the Convent at Paray-le-Monial in France.

*An Obscure Nun*

It does not appear that this devout religious had known of this devotion prior to the revelations, or at least that she had paid any special attention to it. On the feast of St. John, Christ allowed Margaret Mary to rest her head close to His heart, just as He had previously permitted St. Gertrude, and revealed to her that she was to make known to the world the wonders of His love in the devotion of the Sacred Heart. Of the many apparitions with which she was favored, that which is known as the "great apparition" occurred on June 16, 1675, during the Octave of Corpus Christi.

While Margaret was kneeling in prayer before the altar, Christ appeared to her and pointing to His heart, said: "Behold this heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing to testify its love for them, even to the exhausting and consuming of itself for their sake. But in return for this I receive nothing from the generality of mankind but ingratitude through the contempt, irreverences, sacrileges and coldness with which I am treated in this Sacrament of love." He commissioned Margaret to spread the devotion to the Sacred Heart, to encourage the faithful to receive Holy Communion in reparation for the offenses and indifference of men, and to offer themselves in consecration to His Sacred Heart.

The news of these apparitions and revelations served to stimulate the diffusion of this devotion especially throughout France. Nevertheless it met with considerable opposition from the Jansenists, from some ecclesiastics, and for a time from the Austrian government. The Holy See was repeatedly entreated to place upon the devotion special marks of its approval. But Rome held aloof. In 1697 the nuns of the Visitation and ex-Queen Mary of England petitioned In-



nocent XII to establish a special Office and Mass in honor of the Heart of Jesus. The Holy See, however, apparently fearful that the devotion might lead to abuses, and that the use of the heart as the symbol of Christ's redeeming love might be overdone, declined. In 1707 Clement XI likewise rejected a similar petition.

### *Rome Moves Slowly*

Some twenty years later during the pontificate of Benedict XIII, the request was again urged from various sources throughout the Christian world. The Holy Father submitted the matter for examination to the Congregation of Rites. After lengthy investigation the Congregation expressed itself adversely to the petition. Meanwhile the devotion had continued to spread, proving its wholesome character and keeping free from the exaggerations and superstitions with which well-meaning but indiscreet souls are sometimes apt to embarrass new expressions of piety. It was not until repeated appeals were made during the reign of Clement XIII that the matter was again submitted for further examination to the Congregation of Rites.

By this time all difficulties and scruples had been cleared away and the request was finally granted in 1765. This was, however, only for individual churches and only upon special application being made for the privilege. It was not until 1856 that Pius IX, yielding to petitions from all parts of Christendom, extended the feast to the universal Church under the rite of double major. This was almost two centuries after the apparitions to Margaret in her convent at Paray-le-Monial.

From this review of the origin and development of this devotion, two facts stand out prominently: First is the marked conservatism and cautious reserve, almost bordering on suspicion, with which the Church, acting through the Holy See, regarded the new devotion. The second is the fact that in her prolonged examination of the devotion, the revelations of Blessed Margaret were of no weight, having been almost entirely disregarded.

### *Her Chief Concern*

The Church's fundamental concern was to see that the new devotion fitted harmoniously, without strain or dispre-

portion, into her constant practice of the worship of God and of His divine Son, our Saviour, in accordance with the teachings of Christ and His Apostles. Once it was made unmistakably clear that the new devotion dovetailed perfectly with her traditional teaching, and was conducive to the honor of God and to the quickening of the spiritual life of her children, with no dangers of exaggeration or overemphasis, she crowned it with her official approval as suitable for use in the universal Church. Consequently it is incorrect to say that this devotion rests upon the revelations vouchsafed to a private individual, which may perhaps be illusory and deceptive. It is true that the revelations of Blessed Margaret stimulated the spread of the devotion among the faithful, but it was not in virtue of these, but of its congruence with her traditional teaching, that the official sanction of the Church was conferred upon it.

As a matter of fact, it was only after she had sanctioned the devotion that she subjected the revelations of Blessed Margaret to official scrutiny and after the most careful investigation pronounced them authentic. Her infallibility of course is not involved in this decision of her commission, but it will command the respect of every person, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, who knows with what extreme caution the Church proceeds in matters of this character. Hence, even if one were to admit, what is indeed most improbable, that the revelations of Blessed Margaret were mere figments of the imagination, the devotion to the Sacred Heart would lose nothing of its interior truth or spiritual beauty, because it rests ultimately upon the unshakable foundation of the truth of the divinity of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### *Finger of God*

The recent action of the Church in canonizing Blessed Margaret Mary, thus listing her among the saints in Heaven, places the stamp of her further approval upon the devotion, of which she was the chief advocate. Today the devotion is practiced throughout the universal Church. There is scarcely a parish Church in the world in which one cannot find a statue, a picture, an emblem of some sort, of the Sacred Heart. Scarcely a Church from the frozen snows of Alaska to the burning sands of Egypt in which prayers are not said or hymns sung in honor of the Sacred Heart.

Thirty-one *Messengers of the Sacred Heart* proclaim in various languages the fruitfulness of this devotion to the races of the world. In our own country we have *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart* published by the Jesuit Fathers in New York City, which is worthy of a place in every Catholic home in America. To its late editor, Father John H. O'Rourke, S. J., the writer and the students at Illinois will long be indebted for the zeal and eloquence with which he preached this devotion among us.

In the remarkable spread of this devotion in the face of opposition from those in high places and in low, from both within and without the Church, and in spite even of the prolonged reserve of ecclesiastical authority toward it, until now it finds congenial lodgement in every parish Church in the Catholic world, is there not evident the manifest design of Divine Providence? Must not every person, Catholic or non-Catholic, who has followed with an open mind and unjaundiced eyes the unretardable growth of this mighty devotion, feel impelled to conclude: "Surely, the finger of God is here." True, there are some captious critics who say, it is too mystic and ideal, others who say just the opposite, it is too carnal and sensuous. Still others there are who say it is too sentimental. In so far as these judgments do not refer to reprehensible exaggerations, are we not justified in replying to all such critics in the words addressed by St. Paul to the Romans: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"<sup>1</sup>

#### *Vitalizes Other Devotions*

Let us now consider the beauty of this devotion and the profound appeal it makes to the human heart. It is this devotion which has been largely instrumental in preventing Christ from shrivelling to a cold, empty abstraction far removed from the anxieties of struggling men and women—a position into which He seems to have fallen in most of the churches of our separated brethren—and has kept Him the living, abiding, and inescapable Christ and Saviour that He is, before the eyes of His children. It has been the devotion to the Sacred Heart that has added warmth and vitality to the devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and has stimulated frequent Communion and has brought and still brings myriads

<sup>1</sup>Rom. 9:20.

of troubled souls to find courage and strength in prayer before the tabernacle in which He dwells.

The intimate nature of Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, omnipotent and omniscient, and infinite in His glory and perfections, is veiled from our eyes in an opaque mantle of mystery. It is the incarnate God, Jesus Christ, Who walked among us and talked to us, Who loved us even unto death, Who gives us our best and deepest insight into the mind and heart of God. By keeping the love of God manifested through His divine Son, our Lord, and symbolized by His Sacred Heart constantly before us, we have a firm anchorage on that supreme and abiding Reality, God Himself, without which religion dwindles into mere ethical culture or dies altogether.

#### *Robert The Bruce*

To enable our readers, Catholic and non-Catholic, to perceive more clearly how the devotion to the Sacred Heart helps to attain the results above mentioned, and to secure a deeper insight into the tender beauty of this devotion, let me draw an analogy from the honor and reverence in which the heart of Robert the Bruce is held by the people of Scotland. Let me tell again the simple story of this brave soldier, memorable alike in prose and poetry, in song and story. It may throw a flood of light upon our tender devotion to the Heart of Christ, and may well be remembered when everything else I say on this subject is forgotten.

Few names in the history of Scotland stir such memories as the name of Robert the Bruce, the leader of the Scottish chiefs. Bold warrior that he was, he spent his life in fighting for the freedom of Scotland. At Argyllshire, at the pass of Brander, on the fields of Stirling and Bannockburn, he has written in indelible lettering the moving story of his defense of his native land. At last in 1320 the brave soldier lay dying at Cardross. His faithful lieutenant Douglas was kneeling at his side.

"Douglas," said the Scottish chief, "Bruce is dying. These eyes that looked with hatred on the countenances of the enemies of my native land and gazed so lovingly into the faces of my brave Scottish chiefs will soon be closed. These lips that blew the bugle blast to call from vale and crag and peak my Scottish clan will soon be hushed. This hand that

off did draw the sword and reddened it with the blood of the enemies of bonnie Scotland, will soon lie limp at my side. But, Douglas, when Bruce is dead, when my spirit shall have passed to that fairer land to breathe forever the sweet air of liberty, take the heart from out my bosom. Carry it over land and sea, and bury it in the sand made sacred by the footsteps of the Master. Bury my heart, dear Douglas, outside the walls of Jerusalem where brave Crusaders fought to win back from the hands of the Mohammedans the most sacred shrine in Christendom—the Holy Sepulchre of my Saviour, Jesus Christ."

*"In the Clenched Hands . . ."*

Tenderly Douglas took the heart of Bruce from out his bosom and placed it in a golden casket which he carried close to his breast. With his Scottish chiefs and clans he turned his face toward Palestine, to carry out the last wish of his dead leader. On their way they passed through Spain. Here they found Christian Spain at death grips with the Moors, seeking to throw off the menace of the Crescent which for seven centuries had been looming up as a sinister shadow at its very door.

Without hesitation the Scottish knights threw their forces into the balance in defense of Christian Spain. All day long the battle raged. Loud was the clash of arms, fierce was the impact of fighting men. Now the crescent was in the ascendant, and the cross was in the dust. Now the cross rose to the kiss of sunlight, while the crescent was trampled on by angry feet. All day long the victory oscillated back and forth, awaiting the side that could muster a final and decisive blow.

At eventide the slanting rays of the sun falling into the eyes of the swarthy Spaniards disconcerted them. The Moors charged in. Back, back, back, they drove the Spaniards. Instantly Douglas saw the danger. Reaching into his bosom he drew forth the golden locket and held it high. For one brief moment it glistened before the eyes of his soldiers. Then he hurled it out among the Moors. "On, brave Scots," he cried, "and save the heart of Bruce!"

With fearless abandon the Scottish soldiers, fighting now like mad men, hurled themselves into the ranks of the

Moors. Back, back, back they drove them till soon the Moors were fleeing in riot from the field. The crisis had turned. Victory rested that evening upon the proud banners of Aragon and Castile. Removing the bodies from the heap where the fighting was the thickest, the Scots found at the very bottom the body of Douglas, cold and dead. But in the clenched hands pressed tightly against his breast they saw the golden locket containing the heart of Bruce.

No peril was great enough, no danger terrible enough to deter them from saving the heart of Bruce. How our hearts are thrilled as we live over again this deed of bravery and devotion. How we find ourselves saying: if we were but given the opportunity to show our mettle, how we would be willing to overcome any obstacle, to brave any peril to rescue the heart of one we loved.

*Flinging Another Heart*

The curtain of the centuries is raised. The twilight of eventide is falling with its velvet pall upon the city of Jerusalem that pinnacles a mountain in ancient Judea. Inside the Cenacle the Master with His Apostles is at table. Dame rumor has told the Apostles that this very night the Jewish mob will gather to seize their leader. They have the presentiment that it is their last meal together. They are awaiting the Master's legacy to them. Over the Saviour's handsome face comes that look of intense seriousness that tells the disciples that the long awaited time has come. Then, as the Evangelist narrates, "Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to His disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is my body. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins."<sup>1</sup> "Do ye this for a commemoration of me."<sup>2</sup>

When Christ spoke those momentous words of consecration, Catholics know that the bread and wine were changed through a miracle of His divine power into His own body and blood. But has it ever occurred to you that when He turned to the Apostles with the mandate: "Do ye this for a

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 26:26-28.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 22:19.

commemoration of me," He then and there flung His Sacred Heart out among the races of all the world—that He hurled it to the four corners of the earth? For the Apostles, docile to that divine command, carried that Eucharistic Heart out among the Corinthians, the Philippians, the Colossians, out into Mesopotamia, and Libya, and the country about Cryene, out into the farthest stretches of the Grecian and Roman empires. Their successors have carried the Master's heart into all the countries of the world.

Today that heart is flung out among the Esquimaux on the frozen stretches and amid the eternal snows of Labrador, as well as among the turbaned dwellers on the burning sands of the Sahara. That same heart is flung out to those who gather in the great Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris as well as to those who assemble in the small frame church in the lonely countryside or the little adobe chapel on the plains of Arizona. Out among the people who speak the sharp guttural words of the Dane, as well as among those who use the soft liquid tongue of the Latin, out among those who labor along the bleak coast of Iceland and among those who toil on the sunny vine-clad hills of southern Italy, that Heart is thrown. Even across the arching vault of nineteen centuries that Eucharistic Heart has been flung so that it comes to us today in this new land of America the same as from the hand of Christ in the Cenacle at Jerusalem.

Unlike the heart of Bruce, it is not thrown out to be trampled upon by the angry feet of Moors, but it is exposed to the trampling feet of apathy, indifference and cold neglect. Yours it is to rescue the Heart of Christ, not by the slaying of Mohammedans, but by deeds of love, by receiving it frequently in Holy Communion, and visiting it in its lonely prison in the tabernacle. If men but knew the blessings and favors and joys that flow in lavish measure from that Eucharistic Heart, how quickly would man's indifference vanish.

#### *Love's Alchemy*

One of the most beautiful poems that came out of the travail of the World War is called *Alchemy*. It depicts a young wife who gave up her husband to join Pershing's forces to fight for his country's cause on the distant soil of

France. It portrays how her love pursued him across the ocean, and how she sought to transmute the stars into symbols of her love. 'She is pictured as saying:

Each night when day begins to go,  
I stand beside my door and throw  
Into the greying sky above  
A thousand kisses to my love.  
And pitying Night, who knows a kiss  
When thrown so far will sometimes miss,  
Turns each into a star for me,  
So that wherever he may be,  
Whene'er he sees them flaming bright,  
He'll know I'm kissing him good-night.

The love of Christ in the Eucharistic Heart follows you ceaselessly. Through the alchemy of the Church's liturgy, the expression of its abiding affection is transmuted into the star of the sanctuary lamp that burns as a reminder of His love and presence not only during the waking hours of the day but during the silent watches of the night, from greying twilight in the West to purpling dawn in the East. When you see the stars shining in the sky will you not think of the star of the sanctuary lamp calling you with its silent pleading?

Will you not join at least in spirit the ranks of the million pilgrims traveling from all parts of the world to the great Eucharistic Congress, held every two years in a different country, to rescue the heart of Christ not from the angry feet of Moors but from the trampling feet of cold indifference? Are you in earnest when you say that you would really seek to rescue the heart of Christ that is hurled into the highways of the world? Then come on other days than Sunday to greet your Eucharistic King. Receive that Sacred Heart often in Holy Communion. Enthroned the picture of that Heart in the bosom of your home. Spread among our non-Catholic friends a devotion for the Sacred Heart that will bring them ultimately to kneel before the altar of our Eucharistic King.

#### *The Veil Will Fall*

Then when the angel of death comes to close our eyes and to sound in our ears the bugle blast for the last Home-



coming in the Valley of Josaphat, it will be our consciousness of the rescue of the heart of Christ that will sustain us in that dread crisis. That Heart will be as a flaming star that will guide us safely out of the darkness of the Valley of Josaphat, beyond the peaks of the tallest Himalayas, into the Kingdom of the eternal day. There the veil will fall from our eyes, and within the Eucharist we shall see the lineaments of the face of Christ. Then will the Master take us, His rescuers, in His everlasting arms and press us so close to His bosom that we shall feel and hear the throbbing of the Sacred Heart of Christ.

### Discussion Aids

Define the Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart. Is there historical evidence of the existence of this doctrine in the early centuries of Christianity? Trace its history, discussing in their connection with it St. Gertrude, St. John Eudes, the nun, Juliana, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Innocent XII; Clement XI, Clement XIII, and Pius IX. Discuss the beauty of the devotion and its profound appeal. Tell the story of the heart of Robert Bruce. Show how Jesus Christ at the Last Supper made a gift of His Heart to the world. Discuss at length.

### Practices:

Try to revitalize your devotions by frequent meditation on God's unspeakable love for us creatures.

Make the nine first Fridays in reparation.

Teach children the great love of God for all men.

## Chapter XXXVII

### THE HOLY NAME: WHY REVERENCE IT?

*The Catholic Church Wars Against Profanity Which Is So Common Today*

One of the most impressive memorials in Paris, dear to the heart of every Frenchman, and visited annually by thousands of travelers from all parts of the world, is the tomb of Napoleon Bonaparte in the Hotel des Invalides. It rests beneath a majestic dome, erected by the famous architect Mansart, and is strangely reminiscent of St. Paul's in London. Around the central crypt are chapels in which repose the remains of two men intimately associated with the Emperor in his mighty scheme of placing all Europe at the feet of France. They are his two brothers, Joseph, King of Spain, and Jerome, King of Westphalia. There, too, repose the two great generals, Turenne and Vauban. The martial atmosphere is further enhanced by the scene depicted in the cupola of the dome, showing St. Louis offering to the Saviour the sword with which he fought for the Christian faith.

Leaning over a balustrade, the visitor looks down into the open crypt upon a sarcophagus of red Finland granite, the gift of the Emperor, Nicholas of Russia, in which are contained all that is mortal of the great Napoleon. His remains were brought back to France from the island of St. Helena in fulfillment of the dead Caesar's wish, as expressed in his last will, and now inscribed over the bronze entrance to the crypt: "I desire that my ashes repose on the banks of the Seine, in the midst of the French people whom I have loved so much." Gazing upon the sarcophagus are twelve colossal figures, representing the chief victories of the greatest soldier of France. Between the statues are displayed fifty-four flags, taken from the hands of the enemy and symbolizing the victories of Napoleon at Austerlitz, Jena, the Battle of the Bridges, under the Pyramids in Egypt, and

all the other battlefields where the tricolor of France waved in victory.

### *Eloquent Symbols*

Tattered and torn, scarred with the holes of bullets, and crimsoned with the blood of dying warriors, these flags stand beside the tomb of the great Napoleon as the mute but eloquent symbols of the dauntless valor and bravery of the soldiery of France. Hither the Frenchman brings his children to feast their eyes upon the memorials of their former greatness, and bathe their minds in an atmosphere redolent with the martial grandeur of a glorious past. History is speaking to the youth of France from that silent tomb and from every bullet hole in those tattered flags. The heart of the Frenchman beats faster and his eyes light up, as he gazes upon these symbols of courage, of heroism, and of victory achieved by his fellow countrymen on the bloody field of battle.

Let us suppose that on the fourteenth of July, when the French are celebrating Bastille Day and while a vast throng of citizens is standing with bowed heads before the ashes of the mighty dead, and gazing in silent reverence upon the tattered flags, a vandal should suddenly rush through the door into the open crypt. Raising a huge sledge hammer before the eyes of the amazed throng, he brings it crashing down upon the tomb until he has demolished it. Then he seizes the flags, gathered from all the battlefields where Napoleon's soldiers fought and died, and tearing them to shreds, stamps upon them. Can you not imagine how the indignation of the French people would burst out with fury upon the scoundrel guilty of so heinous an outrage?

Would not the gendarmes have the greatest difficulty in restraining the indignant throng from tearing the profaner limb from limb? Would not the whole population of France from Cherbourg to Marseilles rise up as a single man in protest against such desecration of the name and memory of their honored dead? Would they not say as with a single voice: "The man who desecrates these hallowed symbols of our nation's past insults every son and daughter of France. It is not merely the crime of vandalism. It is the sacrilege of profanation—the desecration of memorials held forever sacred by the chivalrous people of France."

### *A Verbal Effigy*

Why should this tomb and these flags be held in such honor and reverence? Is the tomb not simply a piece of granite, and the flags mere tattered rags? Yes, they are such, but they are also something infinitely more. They are symbols of the valor and the bravery of the soldiery of France. It is because of what they *symbolize* to the people of France that they are held in such reverence.

Words too are symbols. They are the verbal effigies of ideas, persons, and things. It is because of the realities which they symbolize that they derive any honor bestowed upon them. The person who is deserving of the highest honor and reverence that man can render is our Saviour, Jesus Christ. He is the untarnished mirror of the majesty of God. As the God incarnate Who redeemed the world from the effects of its own sinfulness by dying for us upon Calvary's Cross, Christ is entitled to the love, honor and reverence of all mankind. Since the name of Jesus stands as the symbol, the verbal effigy of the personality of Christ, it follows that the Holy Name should be enshrined in the hearts of men, and should receive from them the highest honor paid to any name uttered by human lips. In honoring the Holy Name we honor Jesus Christ Himself. In profaning that sacred name we profane Christ Himself.

It is probable that many people who profane the Holy Name do not realize that it stands as the symbol of the divine personality, Jesus Christ Himself, as truly as a painting or a sculptured effigy represents the Saviour. It is true that the latter represents Christ in a more visible and graphic manner, but not more really, and even not so intimately as the Holy Name itself does. If people understood more clearly how profanation of the sacred name of Jesus reflects irreverence toward Christ Himself, it is probable that few who call themselves Christians would be guilty of such irreverence. Let us therefore present the following example to illustrate this point so clearly that even the little child can see and understand.

### *An Illustration*

The scene occurs in Chicago in the beautiful Cathedral of the Holy Name. It has been so designated to hold aloft forever before the eyes of Christian people the great ideal of

reverence for the august name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. A vast congregation is assembled to hear holy Mass. His Eminence the Cardinal, with his two auxiliary Bishops, the officers of the Mass, preceded by a long line of acolytes in cassock and surplice, have just arrived at the altar. Now let us suppose that a man carrying a sledge hammer suddenly appears, hurrying down the central aisle. He opens the gates of the sanctuary and climbs upon the altar. Then before the horrified eyes of the clergy and laity, he rains blow after blow upon the figure of Christ nailed to the Cross until it falls in fragments upon the floor. Then he tramples upon them while he shouts: "This is what I think of your God, Jesus Christ."

Can you imagine the horror that would fill the hearts of priests and people at the sight of such a sacrilege? Can you not imagine the indignation that would sweep over the whole Christian world at the news of such a desecration? Would not the whole of Christendom arise in indignant protest against such a profanation? Would not even the weakest Catholic, careless and negligent though he be in the practice of his holy faith, burn with indignation at the news of such an outrage? More sacrilegious even than the despoliation of Napoleon's tomb and its battle flags would be this desecration of the emblem, sacred to all the Christian world; the effigy of Christ dying upon Calvary's Cross.

#### *How Differ?*

Surely no Christian, even the most indifferent, could fail to perceive the malice of such an act of profanation. He would probably be willing to endure any suffering before he would stoop to so heinous a sacrilege. Yet how does this act differ in character from the action of the man who profanes the Holy Name of Jesus? One tramples in the dust the sculptured likeness of Christ; the other tramples in the mire of cursing and profanity the verbal effigy of the Saviour.

The first symbol was carved by human hands; the second was conceived by the Most High in Heaven. It is the name which the angel revealed to the Blessed Virgin. It had been chosen by Almighty God before the child had been conceived in her womb. "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name

Jesus."<sup>1</sup> Nor is the sculptured symbol more expressive or meaningful than the verbal one. For the name Jesus means *Saviour*, as was disclosed by Almighty God in revealing the mission of Christ on earth. Thus the angel declared to Mary: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus. *For he shall save his people from their sins.*"<sup>2</sup>

Reason dictates that reverence be shown toward the sculptured likeness of Christ. But not only reason, but Almighty God, speaking through the inspired words of St. Paul, commands us to honor the Holy Name. "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names: That in the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth."<sup>3</sup>

#### *No Substantial Difference,*

We do not strain at any figure of speech or at any forced comparison, therefore, when we ask in calm earnestness: How does the action of the man who takes a name chosen by Almighty God in Heaven, the most sacred name that human lips can utter, and tramples it in the mire of cursing and profanity, differ in malice from the action of the man who tramples upon the fragments of the sculptured likeness of Christ? The simple truth is that there is no substantial difference in the malice of these two acts. If there be any difference at all, the greater malice would seem to lie in the profanation not of an earth born symbol but of the heaven born symbol of the divine personality, the Holy Name of Jesus, at the sound of which "every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth."

We are all to some extent victims of the tyranny of the senses. We are more easily impressed by what we can see with the eyes and feel with the hands than by realities which we discern not with the senses but with the intellect. Hence it is that even the dullest man can see the figure of Christ in the sculptured statue, though he cannot see the Saviour in the verbal effigy, but discerns the divine personality behind that symbol only by a process of reasoning.

<sup>1</sup>Luke 1:31.

<sup>2</sup>Matt. 1:21.

<sup>3</sup>Philip. 2:8-10.

Once, however, the meaning of that tremendous symbol is made known to him, once it is made clear to him that the name is the verbal effigy of Jesus Christ Himself, then it becomes difficult to understand how he could ever bring himself to the sacrilege of profaning the Holy Name of Jesus any more than he could ever bring himself to the crime of trampling the sculptured image of Christ under his feet. It is difficult to see how Christian people could excuse him more readily for the former than for the latter. We have dwelt at considerable length upon this important point, that the Holy Name is the symbol, *the verbal effigy of Jesus Christ Himself*, because we are convinced that most sins of profanity against the sacred name are traceable ultimately to the failure to understand this truth, and that they will largely cease when their malice is clearly perceived.

*"Thou Shalt Not Take. . ."*

True, there is some profanity, particularly on the part of the young, that is traceable to their slavish copying of others. Because some people are foolish enough to render themselves slaves to drunkenness, sensuality and profanity is no reason why we should subject ourselves to the tyranny of such vices. Youth should remember that vulgar and profane speech is an indication of a lack not only of culture and refinement but of character and manhood. "Out of the abundance of the heart," said our Blessed Lord, "the mouth speaketh." It is reasonable to believe that when a youth, who has fallen into the habit of profanity through thoughtless imitation of others, realizes the insult it offers to Almighty God, he will speedily terminate so vile a practice.

Let us now turn from these considerations, proposed by human reason, to the inspired words of Holy Writ to observe the emphasis it places upon the duty of reverence to the name of God and of His divine Son, our Lord and Saviour. In the Book of Exodus we read the words of the divine command: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain."<sup>1</sup> The first part of this injunction constitutes the second commandment in the decalogue. It commands us to speak with reverence of God and of holy things.

<sup>1</sup>Exodus. 20:7.

This refrain is sounded frequently in the books of the Old Testament. Thus Ezechiel utters the inspired prophecy: "And I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel, and my holy name shall be profaned no more: and the Gentiles shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel."<sup>1</sup>

### *Christ—The Anointed*

When we come to the New Testament, which depicts the life and teachings of our Saviour, we find an increased emphasis upon the sanctity, power and reverential character of the Holy Name of Jesus. To the name, Jesus, is added that of "Christ," which means the "anointed." This title is expressive of office and honor. Thus under the Old Law it was the custom to anoint priests, prophets and kings with oil, to signify that they were called to play a special role in the relations between God and man. When our Saviour came into the world, He was called upon to play the three-fold role of Priest, Prophet and King. His anointment, however, was not from man but from on high. This the prophet clearly indicates when he addresses the Redeemer in the words: "Thou hast loved justice, and hated iniquity: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."<sup>2</sup>

The efficacy of invoking His name in prayer is thus expressly taught by our Blessed Lord: "And whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do: that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask me anything in my name, that I will do."<sup>3</sup> A striking instance of the efficacy of a petition sought in the name of Christ is narrated in the *Acts of the Apostles*. On a certain day Peter and John were about to enter the temple at Jerusalem when a beggar who was lame from birth entreated them for alms. Whereupon Peter said: "Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk. And taking him by the right hand, he lifted him up, and forthwith his feet and soles received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and

<sup>1</sup>Ezechiel, 39:7.

<sup>2</sup>Ps. 44:8.

<sup>3</sup>John 14: 13-14.



went with them into the temple, walking and leaping, and praising God."<sup>1</sup>

*"No Other Name under. . ."*

Later on Peter and John were asked by Annas and Caiphas and the kindred of the high priest: "By what power or by what name, have you done this?" To which Peter unhesitatingly replied: "Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by him this man standeth here before you whole." Then he added those impressive words which should be written indelibly into the memory of every follower of the Crucified Christ: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."<sup>2</sup>

Reverence for the name of God and of His divine Son is not, therefore, a recent development. Neither is it of human origin. It is a command of the Most High, repeated through a long line of prophets, and reaching its climactic expression in the words of Christ and of His apostles. Visitors to the catacombs of St. Callixtus on the outskirts of Rome will find the sacred words *Jesus* and *Christus* carved in the soft limestone over the tombs of the martyrs. The literature of the first four centuries describing the ordeals of Christians in the Roman amphitheater shows that they met death with a smile lighting their faces and pronouncing with their dying breath the sacred name of Jesus.

#### *Honey to Her Lips*

Down through all the centuries of the Christian era, the Church has held aloft before the eyes of her children the glorious name of her divine Founder. She carves that Holy Name upon the cornerstone of her Churches, writes it upon her altars, breathes it at the bedside of the dying. It is the name of Jesus which occurs most frequently in her prayers at Mass and in the administration of her sacraments. The Holy Name of Jesus is as music to her ears and as honey to her lips. She encourages her children to invoke that sacred name often, especially in time of danger. One of the hymns

<sup>1</sup>Acts 3:8-9.

<sup>2</sup>Acts 4:10-12.

that visitors to Catholic churches will find is most frequently sung by congregations during Mass is the following.

*Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.*

Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With rapture fills my breast:  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest,  
No voice can sing, no heart can  
frame,  
Nor can the memory find  
A sweeter sound than Thy blest  
Name  
O Saviour of mankind!

#### *His Last Words*

A striking manifestation of the devotion and love, which should burn in every Christian heart for the Saviour and His sacred name, is narrated by the learned Dominican, Father Charles J. Callan. A young Catholic man lay on an operating table in a New York hospital. The doctors and nurses were gathered around him, ready to begin the operation. Resting his hand gently upon the patient's shoulder, the chief surgeon said: "My young friend, I think I should tell you frankly that your malady has been diagnosed as cancer of the tongue. In order to save your life, it will be necessary for us to remove your tongue. If there is anything you wish to say, please do so now, as you will be speechless the rest of your life."

As the full import of the doctor's words sank home to the youth his face paled in a momentary shudder. There was a twitching of the muscles about the mouth. Then, pulling himself together, he looked into the faces of those around him, and said in a calm, earnest voice: "I want my last words to be: 'Praised be the sacred name of Jesus!'" In mentioning the incident later, the chief surgeon declared it was the most eloquent sermon ever uttered in his presence, and one he would carry with him to his dying day. Would that it could be placed before the eyes of every man and woman in America.

The Church does not render, however, merely lip ser-

vice to the ideal of reverence for the Holy Name. She translates this ideal into life and action. She has brought millions of men into a mighty organization known as the Holy Name Society. This society, which is to be found in practically every parish in our land, has as its primary end the inculcation of reverence for the Holy Name and the avoidance of all profanity. Every Catholic man in America should be a soldier in this mighty army which emblazons upon its raised banners the sacred name of Jesus, and pledges itself to reverence that name in chastity of speech.

### *Holy Name Society*

Probably the most impressive of all the gatherings in connection with the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago in the summer of 1926 was the one sponsored by the Holy Name Society. Held at night in Soldiers Field, a vast throng, numbering over 400,000 men from all parts of our country and from every foreign land, assembled to manifest to the world their reverence and devotion to the Holy Name. The climax of the meeting was reached when the great arc lights were extinguished, and every man held aloft in his right hand a lighted candle, as a symbol of his living faith in Christ and his reverence for the Holy Name. Every man then joined in repeating in unison the following pledge of the Holy Name Society:

"In honor of His divine name, I pledge myself against perjury, blasphemy, profanity and obscene speech. . . I dedicate my manhood to the honor of the sacred name of Jesus, and beg that He will keep me faithful to the pledge until death. . ."

The voices of the members of this mighty army of almost half a million men rose in volume until its echo could be heard great distances through the streets of Chicago. Non-Catholic journalists, describing the effect of the myriad candlelights shining in the darkness and the surging roar of the men's voices rising like thunder from the earth, declared in their papers the next morning that it was the most stirring and impressive demonstration of religious faith and loyalty ever staged in the western hemisphere or probably anywhere in the world.

### *Living, Abiding Realities*

While pleased with such impressive public demonstrations of faith, which certain occasions render appropriate and wholesome, the Church is far more concerned to see that each individual translates the ideals of faith into proper habits of speech and conduct in his private life. She asks not merely the pledge but its fulfillment. She demands that every man and boy, worthy of the name Catholic, speak with reverence of God and of His divine Son, Jesus Christ. She can scarcely bring herself to think that a woman or a girl would so debase herself as to indulge in profanity. Not a single one of her vast empire of more than 430,000,000 members, speaking every language under the sun, can be unconscious of the daily tug of the Church's teachings upon his habits of speech and conduct—pulling them in the direction of reverence and chastity. Is it not apparent not only to those of the household of the faith, but to our dear non-Catholic friends as well, that the Church's ceaseless insistence upon reverence for the name of God and of His divine Son, Our Saviour, is but the external reflection of an inward and living faith in these abiding Realities?

Today in many a pulpit calling itself Christian, God is spoken of as a vague force somewhere off in the distant sky, a "system of cosmic patterns," the meaning of which no one understands, an impersonal energy that for all practical purposes is lost in the vast reaches of the universe. Other ministers speak of God as though they were none too sure of His very existence. From these same pulpits Christ is pictured as an ethical teacher with the limited outlook of a Palestinian Jew of the first century, with no vestige of the divine about Him. How refreshing to the weary occupants of such depressing pews must it be to discover that in the Mother Church of Christianity, God and His Christ are not exiled as outmoded myths or as threads of tenuous gossamer tangled somewhere off in the cobwebs of the sky, but are living, abiding Realities, "closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

How comforting must it be to such members to discover that in the great historic Church of Christendom, the only one which unites the twentieth century with the first, God and His Christ are still the objects of our love and worship.

still the unseen witnesses of our every conversation, the spectators of all the thoughts and aspirations that stir in the silent kingdom of the soul. Will they not accept our outstretched hand, and join with us in proclaiming to a world that has lost its moorings and is wandering in the mists of uncertainty that God, our Father, and Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Saviour, still live, still rule, still reign! Will they not join with us, too, in proclaiming to the twentieth century our undying conviction of the truth which St. Peter proclaimed to the first: "For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved!" No other name than that which will be on our dying lips—the sacred name of Jesus.

### Discussion Aids

How should you explain to a non-Catholic why Catholics revere the Holy Name? What is the meaning of the name Jesus? Quote the text in which St. Paul shows that great honor is due to the Name of Jesus. Explain how the Name is the verbal effigy of Jesus Christ Himself. What is the Second Commandment? Quote Ezekiel 29:7. What does *Christ* mean? What did our Blessed Lord promise in His Name? Describe Peter's first miracle. What was Peter's answer to Annas and Caiaphas? Quote Acts 4:10-12. Is the devotion, therefore, of long standing? What is the Holy Name Society?

### Practices:

Say "Blessed be the Name of Jesus" whenever you hear the Holy Name profaned.

Join the Holy Name Society and encourage other men to do so.

Avoid all careless or serious taking of the name of God in vain.

## Chapter XXXVIII

### WHY CATHOLICS HONOR MARY

#### *Her Name Is Seldom Heard Among Protestant Christians*

Outside of the Catholic Church the name of Mary is seldom heard. No hymns are sung in her honor. No prayers for Mary's intercession wend their way toward Heaven. In her regard, there is only a silence, cold, strange, and mystifying to the filial hearts of men. In the various creeds which have fallen away from the Mother Church, Mary has been relegated to a position of such obscurity that she has become almost an outcast. But in the Mother Church of which the Divine Son, Jesus Christ, is the living heart and soul, Mary the Mother is not forgotten but is honored and loved second only to God himself.

Why do Catholics honor Mary? In the first place, it should be thoroughly understood that Catholics do not worship Mary in the sense in which they adore Christ. Adoration belongs to God alone; reverence and honor to the Saints. But as Mary is the Queen of Saints, the respect and honor shown her surpasses that accorded the other Saints of God.

The grounds upon which Catholics honor and love Mary may be said to be threefold, her divine maternity, her perpetual virginity, and her Immaculate Conception. First of all, Mary is the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God. She was singled out from among all the women of the universe by the omniscient mind of the Godhead for this unique honor and singular distinction.

Now it is a principle abundantly illustrated in Holy Scripture that when God selects a person for a particular office, He always bestows upon that soul the graces and virtues necessary for the appropriate discharge of its mission. When Moses was chosen by God to be the leader of the Hebrew people, he hesitated because of "impediment and slowness of tongue." But Jehovah reassured him by promising

to supply him with all the qualifications necessary for that high office. "I will be in thy mouth, and I will teach thee what thou shalt speak."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, likewise was the prophet Jeremiah sanctified from his birth because he was to be the herald of truth to Israel. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb in order that he might be a burning and shining light to blaze the way for the coming of the Messiah. That they might fulfill their high office effectively, the Apostles were endowed with the gift of tongues and other powers. As St. Paul says: "Our sufficiency is from God, who hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament."<sup>2</sup>

Important as were the various roles played by personages in the great drama of our redemption, they pale into insignificance in comparison with the role of Mary. For to her was given the most sublime, the most sacred, the most intimate relationship to Jesus that was ever accorded to any human—the relationship of mother to son. For the perfect fulfillment of that sublime office Almighty God lavished upon Mary wondrous and ineffable graces and blessings. She stands, therefore, preeminent among the Saints of Heaven, as the fairest, the most beautiful, and the most worthy of our love and devotion.

#### *The Mother of God*

When we say that Mary is the Mother of God, we assert implicitly two truths. First, that Jesus Christ, her Son, is true man. Otherwise, Mary could not be His Mother. Second, that her Son, the Incarnate Word, is also true God. Otherwise, Mary could not be the Mother of God. "In other words we affirm", as Cardinal Gibbons points out, "that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the word of God who in His Divine nature is from all eternity begotten of the Father, consubstantial with Him, was in the fullness of time again begotten, by being born of the Virgin, thus taking to Himself, from her maternal womb, a human nature of the same substance with hers."<sup>3</sup>

One might object that Mary is only the Mother of the human nature of Christ, and therefore should not be styled

<sup>1</sup>Exodus 4:12.

<sup>2</sup>Cor. 3:6.

<sup>3</sup>Gibbons, *Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 187.

the Mother of God. This objection may be best answered by asking the question: Is our mother the mother of our soul? That, the nobler part of man's nature, is created directly and immediately by Almighty God. And yet no one would dream of referring to his mother as the mother of my material nature, or the mother of my body.

"The comparison", observes Cardinal Gibbons, "teaches us that the terms parent and child, mother and son, refer to the persons and not to the parts or elements of which the persons are composed. Hence no one says: 'The Mother of my *body*, the Mother of my *soul*', but in all propriety, 'My mother' the mother of me who live and breathe, think and act, one in my personality though uniting in it a soul directly created by God, and a material body directly derived from the maternal womb. In like manner, as far as the sublime mystery of the Incarnation can be reflected in the natural order, the Blessed Virgin, under the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, by communicating to the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity, as mothers do, a true human nature of the same substance with her own, is thereby really and truly His Mother."<sup>1</sup>

The second great prerogative of Mary which furnishes additional ground for our devotion is her Perpetual Virginity. Though the Mother of Jesus, she remained ever a Virgin. For the Child that was born to her was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus St. Matthew states that the angel sent by God said to Joseph: "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."<sup>2</sup> St. Luke likewise testified to her perpetual virginity: "The angel was sent from God to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph."<sup>3</sup> Thus she alone of all the race united in herself the twin glories of motherhood and virginity.

#### *Immaculate Conception*

The third prerogative of the Blessed Virgin is her Immaculate Conception. Not only was she free from the slightest stain of actual sin, but by a singular miracle of divine grace she also was free from original sin, with which

<sup>1</sup>Gibbons, *Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup>1:20.

<sup>3</sup>1:27.



all the other children of Adam are born into this world. For it was eminently fitting that she who was destined to be the Mother of Christ, who was to give Him flesh of her flesh and blood of her blood, should be undefiled by even that slight shadow of Adam's fall. To her alone, among all the members of the race, was granted this singular immunity. It is to be noted that the Immaculate Conception does not refer to the miraculous conception of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mother without the intercession of a human father, as many non-Catholics imagine, but to the conception of Mary in the womb of her mother without the stain of original sin.

This dogma of the Immaculate Conception was thus defined by Pope Pius IX: "We define that the Blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved free from every stain of original sin." While this was not officially proclaimed a dogma of the Catholic faith until 1854, it had actually been held in the Church for centuries. As Cardinal Newman points out in his *Development of Doctrine* not all the doctrines of the Church were fully blossomed in the first centuries. Time was required for their growth and development. The mustard tree has wide spreading branches under whose shade many travelers find shelter. But time is required for the tiny mustard seed to unfold its potentialities and reach its mature growth. So it is with this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and with many other doctrines such as The Holy Trinity and the Atonement now held alike by Protestants and Catholics. As W. H. Mallock well says of the Catholic Church: "Her doctrines as she one by one unfolds them, emerge upon us like petals from a half-closed bud; they are not added arbitrarily from without; they are developed from within."

Entirely aside from this threefold evidence, her three prerogatives, there is another and a more compelling reason why we honor and love Mary. That reason is because Jesus Christ honored and loved Mary, His Mother. Of the thirty-three years our Saviour spent on earth, all but three years were spent in the closest and most intimate association with Mary. Indeed, almost all we know of the first thirty years of

our Lord's life is recorded in the verse of the Evangelist; "He went back to Nazareth and was subject to them and grew in age and wisdom before God and man."

Jesus not only obeyed the commands of Mary, He anticipated her every wish. He loved her with all the passionate tenderness and devotion of the warmest and kindest of filial hearts. As a little babe He nestled in her tender arms and drew nourishment from her virgin breasts. And yet that little Babe nestling at His Mother's bosom, and breathing the sweet perfume of His breath into the roses of her cheeks, is none other than the almighty and eternal Godhead. It is the same Infinite and Omniscient Being who called the universe into existence out of the yawning abyss of nothingness and who hung the stars in the heavens as so many lanterns to light our way. It is the infinite Creator of innumerable worlds whose music is the harmony of the celestial spheres; whose mathematics is the orbits of the stars, whose chemistry is the rainbow of the skies, who has written the story of creation in the strata of the rocks and folded them up as the pages of a mighty book for the geologist of after-ages to read and ponder o'er! If the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ Himself, bowed His head in obedience, love and devotion to Mary, His Mother, can we frail children of Eve do better than follow the example of the Master and give Mary the humble tribute of our reverence and our love?

#### *A Strange Hostility*

"In those who disbelieve in Christ's divinity" observes John L. Stoddard, "the slighting of the Virgin Mother may be comprehensible; but why should evangelical Protestants object to designate as Blessed the Mother of the Saviour? Can anyone expect to please even an earthly son by showing a lack of reverence to his mother? How much less, then, can such a course be pleasing to the Son of God, who, while enduring agony upon the Cross, confided His Mother to His beloved disciple? Can there be any doubt that *Christ still loves and reverences His Mother now in Heaven*, to whom He was obedient on earth for thirty years out of the three-and thirty of His life? Certainly, therefore, those who honour the Mother, honour the Son as well; and 'Every crown that is wreathed for Mary is laid at Jesus' feet. . .'

"The schismatic Greek Church and most of the Oriental

sects of Christendom agree with Catholics in reverencing Mary, and in praying for her intercession; and even Mohammedans pay her greater honour than do the majority of Protestant Christians! Yet those who thus ignore the love and intercession of the Blessed Virgin rob the religion of Christ of a legitimate tenderness and sweetness they can never know. Their strange hostility to the Mother of our Saviour is sometimes carried to almost incredible extremes. Rev. J. G. Sutcliffe, formerly curate in Great Yarmouth, England, testifies on this point as follows:—"My vicar, preaching on the Mother of Jesus, taught us that she was 'no better than any respectable girl in our town'!"<sup>1</sup> Surely such men forget, not only what unparalleled honour was conferred upon her by the Almighty, but also how intimately connected was her life with that of her Child—the Incarnate Son of God!"<sup>2</sup>

The beauty and the glories of Mary's character have been the inspiration throughout the ages of many of the world's greatest masterpieces in art and sculpture. Indeed the painting which is said by many critics to be one of the finest that ever came from human hands is the Sistine Madonna that now hangs in the famous Dresden Gallery. It is the masterpiece of the world renowned artist, Raphael.

#### *An Inspiring Ideal*

Even as a youth, Raphael had a special devotion and love of the Virgin Mother. She was his ideal of angelic beauty and virgin innocence. Nothing fascinated him so much as the effort to make the canvas aglow with the majestic beauty of Mary's countenance as perceived by his mental vision. To express through the gentle play of lights and shadows and the subtle blending of colors those delicate and ethereal beauties of the Virgin Mother that seemed ever to defy the coarse medium of the artist's brush, became the overpowering passion of his life. At last, between 1515 and 1519 Raphael succeeded in imprisoning upon the canvas his spiritual vision of the Madonna's beauty. The result is the flowering of the artistic genius of the Italian race—the climax of the painter's art. It remains to this day one of the masterpieces of all time.

<sup>1</sup>Roads to Rome, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup>Stoddard, *Rebuilding a Lost Faith*, pp. 176, 177.

In that face of striking beauty are reflected the powerful strength of a Mother's love combined with the infinite tenderness and delicacy of the Virgin. Through those soft and gentle eyes one perceives the soul within, pure as the angels. Travelers have been so affected by the strange beauty of the painting, that tears have come to their eyes and they have stood transfixed before this vision of celestial loveliness. The things of earth seem to fade away, as they stand enraptured at this glimpse of Heaven, this vision from another world.

But just as Raphael found in his devotion to Mary and his meditation upon the beauties and glories of Mary's character the inspiration to draw from the magic rainbow of his own fancy and to imprison on the canvas colors that were never seen before on land or sea, so will each of us find in our devotion to Mary the inspiration that will give to our souls the urge to so shape our character that its picture will stand out as a masterpiece of beauty on the multi-colored canvass of human life.

#### *Non-Catholics Pay Tribute*

Not only in art and sculpture, but in literature as well, has Mary's inspiration been felt. She has been the theme of some of the greatest of the world's poetry. Even the non-Catholic poet, Wordsworth, pays tribute to the glory of Mary's character in these beautiful lines:

"Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrossed  
With the least shade of thought to sin allied  
Woman! above all women glorified,  
Our tainted nature's solitary boast  
Purer than foam on central ocean tost,  
Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak strewn  
With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon  
Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast,  
Thy image falls to earth."

One of the most quoted of modern poets, Rudyard Kipling, though not of our Faith, has written this touching prayer to Mary:

"Oh Mary, pierced with sorrow,  
Remember, reach and save  
The soul that comes tomorrow  
Before the God that gave!

Since each was born of woman,  
For each at utter need  
True comrade and true foeman  
Madonna, intercede!"

The eminent historian, William H. Lecky, though not a member of the Christian faith, found himself compelled by the facts of history to pay the following tribute concerning the influence of the ideal of the Blessed Virgin upon western civilization: "The world is governed by its ideals, and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more salutary influence than the mediaeval conception of the Virgin. For the first time woman was elevated to her rightful position, and the sanctity of weakness was recognized, as well as the sanctity of sorrow. No longer the slave or toy of man, no longer associated only with ideas of degradation and of sensuality, woman rose, in the person of the Virgin Mother, into a new sphere, and became the object of a reverential homage, of which antiquity had no conception. . . A new type of character was called into being; a new kind of admiration was fostered. Into a harsh and ignorant and benighted age this ideal type infused a conception of gentleness and purity, unknown to the proudest civilizations of the past. In the pages of living tenderness, which many a monkish writer has left in honour of his celestial patron; in the millions who, in many lands and in many ages, have sought to mould their characters into her image; in those holy maidens who, for the love of Mary, have separated themselves from all the glories and pleasures of the world, to seek in fastings and vigils and humble charity to render themselves worthy of her benediction; in the new sense of honour, in the chivalrous respect, in the softening of manners, in the refinement of tastes displayed in all the walks of society; in these and in many other ways we detect its influence. *All that was best in Europe* clustered around it, and it is the origin of many of the purest elements of our civilization."<sup>1</sup>

Mary is not, however, a cold empty abstraction, an ideal to be revered, but revered always from afar. She is not a star hung in the distant heavens reaching us only by a light that shines through the realms of infinite space. She is

<sup>1</sup>Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, vol. 1, p. 225.

our Mother, near and dear to us, loving us with all the warmth of a mother's love. As the little child frightened by the shadows of night finds safety in his mother's arms so will we in time of temptation find a safe refuge by fleeing to the outstretched arms of Mary our Mother. If we will but clasp the white hand of our Mother, stretched out to aid us in every danger, our uncertain footsteps will be guided safely to that golden ladder upon whose rungs we will climb step by step, to the very throne of her Son and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### Discussion Aids

Explain the honor that Catholics give to Mary, upon three grounds. Explain fully what we mean when we say that Mary is the Mother of God. What is meant by Mary's perpetual virginity? What is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception? Does it refer to the miraculous conception of Christ, or to the so-called Virgin Birth? When was it proclaimed by the Church? Had this dogma been held by the Church before this proclamation? Explain. In addition to her three prerogatives, name a fourth reason why Catholics love and honor Mary. Reproduce the substance of John L. Stoddard's view on this doctrine. What may be said of Raphael's masterpieces on the Madonna? What do Wordsworth and Kipling say of Mary? the historian, Lecky?

### Practices:

Cultivate a feeling of nearness to the Mother of God because she is really your heavenly mother.

Say especially in time of temptation, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

Have a picture or a statue of Mary in a conspicuous place in your home.

## Chapter XXXIX

### THE DEVOTION OF THE HOLY ROSARY

*Its Use Has Been Spread Throughout the  
Entire Christian World*

One of the most universal and popular devotions in the Catholic Church is that of the Holy Rosary. It is to be found in all the countries of the world from the frozen stretches of the Yukon to the burning sands of the Sahara and out unto the islands in the Indian Sea. It is popular with all classes, poor and rich, illiterate and learned. The untutored peasant in the field, as well as the learned theologian, find in the rosary the manna for their souls.

Tradition ascribes the popular use of the rosary to St. Dominic, Founder of the Dominican Order. When the Albigensian heresy was spreading through the south of France and the north of Italy in the year 1200, Dominic was commissioned by the Pope to preach against it. His efforts were unavailing. He then besought the aid of Mary. Appearing to Dominic, Mary gave him the rosary bidding him to use it as a weapon against the prevailing heresy. The devotion spread rapidly and in a short time had effected the conversion of more than a hundred thousand heretics.

Later on, when dire calamities loomed up before Christendom, recourse was had to the rosary. To its efficacy the Christians chiefly attributed the deliverance of Europe from the Turks by the well-nigh miraculous victories at Lepanto (1571), Vienna (1683) and Belgrade. It was in thanksgiving for these victories that the feast of the Holy Rosary was established on the first Sunday of October and the whole month dedicated to the Holy Rosary. That the Blessed Virgin was highly pleased with this prayer was clearly evidenced by the fact that when she appeared at Lourdes to St. Bernadette, she held in her hand the rosary.

Pope Leo XIII issued not less than twelve encyclicals and letters apostolic encouraging this devotion. As it averted the evils threatening the Church in the days of St. Dominic, and later on when the crescent of the Turks seek-

ing to replace the Cross of Christ loomed up menacingly against the Christian horizon, so also has it the power to avert the evils threatening the Church, society, and the individual soul in this day and age.

The complete rosary consists of fifteen decades. But ordinarily only the rosary of five decades is said at one time. There are three sets of mysteries upon which one meditates while saying the rosary: the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries. The joyful mysteries commemorate the chief events in the lives of Jesus and Mary before the passion. The sorrowful commemorate the chief events of the passion, while the glorious recall the principal happenings after the passion. They thus serve as an epitome of the lives of Jesus and Mary. The joyful mysteries are customarily commemorated on Monday, Thursday, and the Sundays during Advent, the sorrowful on Tuesday, Friday, and the Sundays during Lent, the glorious on Wednesday, Saturday, and the remaining Sundays of the year.

#### *Joyful Mysteries*

The five joyful mysteries include all the events mentioned in the Gospels concerning the birth and childhood of Christ. The first is the Annunciation. This brings before our minds the scene in the humble home of the Blessed Virgin in Nazareth, when the angel Gabriel brought to her the wonderful message from on high: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. . . Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: Because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said: Behold the hand-



maid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word."<sup>1</sup>

When the humble Virgin bowed obediently to the will of God and uttered the words, "Be it done to me according to thy word," at that moment Christ became incarnate in the Virgin Mary.

The second joyful mystery, the Visitation, directs our thoughts to the meeting of the Blessed Virgin with her cousin, St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist. When Mary entered the home of Elizabeth and saluted her, "the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord. And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because he that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is his name."<sup>2</sup>

The third mystery, the Nativity, brings before us the familiar scene at the stable of Bethlehem where Jesus was born, as the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."<sup>3</sup>

In the fourth mystery, the Presentation, we behold Mary presenting Jesus in the Temple and offering Him to the Eternal Father as the Victim that is to be sacrificed in atonement for the sins of the world. When Mary placed Him in the arms of the Holy Simeon, the latter uttered the prophetic words that revealed the sublimity of her sacrifice: "Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed."<sup>4</sup>

In the fifth mystery, the Finding of Jesus in the Temple,

<sup>1</sup>Luke 1:31-39.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 1:41-50.

<sup>3</sup>Luke 2:14.

<sup>4</sup>Luke 2:34-35.

we contemplate first the desolation that filled the hearts of Mary and Joseph when for three days they were separated from Jesus, and then the ineffable joy and peace that filled their hearts upon finding the Child in the temple, hearing the learned doctors of the law and asking them questions. Whereupon, "He went down with them and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them."<sup>1</sup>

### *Sorrowful Mysteries*

The five sorrowful mysteries bring to our minds in rapid succession the moving events of the last hours of our Saviour's life, from His agony in the garden to His death on Calvary's cross. The first mystery, the Agony in the Garden, portrays the gloom of Gethsemani, where "being in an agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."<sup>2</sup> Jesus sees the awful sufferings He is to undergo on the morrow, and cries out: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."<sup>3</sup>

In the second mystery, the Scourging at the Pillar, we see Jesus being whipped with relentless lashes until His sacred flesh is torn and the blood streams forth. "Then therefore Pilate took Jesus, and scourged Him."<sup>4</sup>

In the third mystery, the Crowning with Thorns, we see the executioners in mockery of Christ's claim to kingship, place upon Him a crown of thorns that pierced His sacred brow. "And the soldiers, plating a crown of thorns, put it upon His Head; and they put on Him a purple garment."<sup>5</sup>

The fourth mystery, The Carrying of the Cross, turns our minds to the journey that our Saviour made from the tribunal of Pontius Pilate to Calvary bearing the Cross on which He was to be crucified. "And they took Jesus, and led Him forth. And bearing His own cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary."<sup>6</sup> "And there followed Him a great multitude of people and of women; who bewailed and lamented Him." Tradition tells us that among this pious

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. 2:51.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 22:44.

<sup>3</sup>Matt. 26:39.

<sup>4</sup>John 19:1.

<sup>5</sup>John 19:2.

<sup>6</sup>John 19:16-17.

<sup>7</sup>Luke 23:27.

throng was Mary, whose soul was indeed pierced with a sword of sorrow as she looked upon her Son bearing His Cross.

The fifth mystery, the Crucifixion, leads us to the climactic event in the sufferings of Christ—His death after three hours agony upon the Cross. "And they crucified Him." "Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother."<sup>1</sup> The words which Christ uttered as He hung upon the Cross reach a climax in the prayers for the forgiveness of His executioners: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."<sup>2</sup>

#### *Glorious Mysteries*

The five glorious mysteries turn our thoughts to the glorious events after His death and lead us to hope that we may share in the joys and glories of His heavenly kingdom. The first mystery, the Resurrection, recalls to our minds Christ's triumph over death. This event constitutes the supreme evidence of Christ's divinity as well as of the truth of the religion which He founded. It robs death of its sting and the grave of its victory.

The second mystery, the Ascension, brings before our minds the scene which occurred forty days after the Resurrection, when Christ ascended in the presence of the Apostles into Heaven.

In the third mystery, the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, we consider the great event which occurred on Pentecost. When the Apostles were gathered together in the upper chamber of a dwelling house in Jerusalem, there came a sound as of a mighty wind, and the Holy Ghost came upon them in the form of tongues of fire. From weak timid men they were transformed into intrepid Apostles who went forth and preached the Gospel fearlessly to every creature.

In the fourth mystery, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into Heaven, we recall the event, not recorded in the Scriptures, but attested by authentic Catholic tradition, of the angels taking the body of the Blessed Virgin after her death into Heaven.

In the fifth mystery, the Coronation, we contemplate the

Crowning of the Blessed Virgin as Queen of the Saints and Angels in heaven. As she went down with Jesus into the depths of sorrow and humiliation, so it is fitting that she should be exalted with Him before all the creatures in heaven.

Thus do the mysteries of the Rosary bring before our minds a panorama of the great events in the life of Christ and of His Blessed Mother. They make us familiar with the moving events in our redemption, and intensify our love for our divine Saviour and for Mary, His Mother, who played so intimate a rôle in the drama of atonement.

#### *The Thermometer of Christianity*

Concerning the power of the Hail Mary that is recited so often in the Rosary, the saintly Thomas a Kempis said: "When I recite the Hail Mary, Heaven rejoices, the earth marvels, Satan withdraws, hell trembles, all sadness vanishes, joy returns, the heart glows, the soul is filled with holy unction; hope animates my bosom and a wonderful consolation gladdens my whole being." Another saintly writer says: "The Hail Mary is small in extent, but great as to the effects; it is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold. It should be frequently on our lips and re-echo in our hearts."

Think of the mysteries when saying the rosary. Then it is not like the windmill prayers of India. For the natives there think that they are praying as long as the wind turns the wheel upon which their prayer is inscribed. The material beads serve as counters of the numbers of prayers said. The practice of using counters, either in the form of small stones or seeds strung on a cord, is a very ancient one. It existed among the hermits in the first centuries.

The rosary may well be called the thermometer of Christianity. When it is used, Christianity is flourishing. When it is neglected, Christianity falls to a low ebb. Pope Pius IX was accustomed to say: "In the whole of the Vatican there is no greater treasure than the rosary." This saintly pontiff was most anxious that the rosary be said daily in every family. The legacy he bequeathed to the faithful was the admonition: "Let the rosary, this simple, beautiful method of prayer, enriched with many indulgences, be habitually recited of an evening in every household. These are my last words to you: the memorial I leave behind me."

<sup>1</sup>John 19:25.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 23:34.

What memories these words conjure to the minds of many of us—memories of the times when we knelt down together at night with father and mother and brother and sister and said the rosary. How sacred and how inspiring those memories will always be to us! May they be the har-binger and the foreshadowing of that ultimate reunion with Christ and his saints in paradise.

While one is saying the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary* of a decade he should meditate upon the particular mystery commemorated therein. It is this meditation which constitutes the heart and soul of the rosary. There is no higher form of prayer than that in which the soul is united to Christ in contemplation. It is through the door of meditation that Christ enters into the kingdom of the soul and ceases to be merely a name and becomes a living and abiding reality.

Thus it is seen that there is no force to the objection that there is too much mechanical repetition in the rosary. For while the lips are repeating the words of the *Hail Mary* the mind is contemplating the various mysteries. Moreover, modern psychology shows us how deeply rooted in human nature is the tendency to repeat over and over again words that come from the depths of a fervent heart. In the one hundred and thirty-fifth psalm David exclaims twenty-seven times: "His mercy endureth forever." St. Francis of Assisi was accustomed to repeat the phrase, "My God and my all!" through many hours of the night. Well may the words of the rosary be on our lips in life, and its beads clasped in our hands at death.

### Discussion Aids

Speak of the Holy Rosary as a universal devotion. Explain the connection that St. Dominic had with the Rosary. In what other crises in the history of the Church did the Rosary prove most availing? How did the Blessed Virgin show her approval of the Rosary to Bernadette? Name a modern Pope who especially encouraged the Rosary. Explain the composition of the Rosary. What mysteries in the lives of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother are commemorated? On what days of the week are the various mysteries said?

Name and explain the joyful mysteries, the sorrowful mysteries, the glorious mysteries. Explain what is meant by *meditating* on the mysteries. How should you answer the objection that there is too much mechanical repetition in the Rosary.

### Practices:

Say at least a decade of the Rosary, daily.

Learn the mysteries of the Rosary and use them on the appointed days of the week.

Meditate with devotion on the religious truth suggested in each mystery.

## Chapter XL SAINT JOSEPH

*Patron of the Universal Church and  
of the Workingman*

The tendency to honor the memory of illustrious men seems to spring spontaneously from one of the deepest instincts of human nature. In all the tribes and races of men, in all the varying stages of civilization, we find the effort always made to rescue the names of their great heroes from complete oblivion. Tombs and mausoleums preserve their mortal remains, monuments are erected to them. Their statues are placed in our public squares, while poets enshrine their memory in immortal verse. Indeed, all history has been defined as but the biography of great men.

Before the admiring eyes of each generation of men, history unfolds the panorama of their lives, the story ancient yet ever new. To the school children of today, the names of Alexander the Great, of Hannibal, of Julius Caesar, are almost as real and vivid as those of the great contemporaries of the day. Their names have survived the wear and tear of centuries, and all the devastation of the blighting finger of time. Thus does the world pay ceaseless homage to her heroes.

### *The Immortality of True Greatness*

If we strive to hold in enduring fame the names of those illustrious men who accomplished great temporal successes, or achievements of a material character, with how much greater earnestness should we enshrine in the sanctuary of a deathless memory the names of those who wrought great spiritual and moral victories, the effect of whose work will never die, but will gather into the granaries of heaven the ceaseless harvest of human souls? If we honor earthly heroes whose achievements frequently crumble and perish, how much more should we honor heavenly heroes, the saints of God, the influence of whose lives will continue throughout

the ages to inspire the souls of men, and to guide their footsteps safely through the winding labyrinth of life? For, to the saints can most fittingly be applied those words of the anonymous poet:

"Were a star quenched on high,  
For ages would its light  
Still streaming from the sky,  
Fall on our mortal sight,  
So when a great man dies,  
For years beyond our ken  
The light he leaves behind him shines  
Upon the paths of men."

On the nineteenth of March we celebrate the feast day of one of the greatest of all the saints of God, St. Joseph. Alone, from among all the sons of men, he was singled out by the omniscient Mind of the eternal Godhead who reads the hearts of men as an open book, to be the spouse of Mary and the foster-father of Jesus. How pure and holy in the sight of Almighty God, must Joseph have been to have been deemed worthy of so great an honor! The evangelist characterizes Joseph simply as "a just man." But what oceans of praise are contained therein, when one realizes that such is not simply the judgment of men, but the unerring verdict of the Holy Ghost!

### *St. Joseph in the Gospel Story*

But seldom does Joseph appear in the pages of the Gospel story. Even on those occasions he seems to stand, as it were, in the background. We see him journeying with Mary to Bethlehem seeking in vain to find for her a place in the inns. With what great anxiety his paternal heart must have throbbed as he went tirelessly from house to house seeking lodging and the needed comforts for Mary who was with child! We find him present in the rude stable at Bethlehem, ministering to Mary, at the birth of the Infant Jesus. With what sentiments of reverence and affection he prostrated himself—the first worshipper of all mankind—before the Incarnate God!

See Joseph again when he is awakened from his sleep by an angel saying: "Arise, and take the child and His mother,



and fly into Egypt."<sup>1</sup> Without a moment's hesitation or delay, Joseph set out in the darkness of the night on that long journey into Egypt to save the life of the Infant Jesus from the designing Herod. With what infinite tenderness did he shield Mary and the Child from the dangers, fatigue and hardships of that flight!

#### *At Nazareth*

The picture which the thought of St. Joseph usually conjures to our minds, however, is the picture of St. Joseph toiling humbly as a carpenter in their obscure home at Nazareth. It was thus that he spent nearly all of his life as the spouse of Mary and the foster-father of Jesus, earning by the sweat of his brow the necessities of life for his holy family. With what devotion and love he must have cared for Mary and the Divine Son, Jesus, in their little cottage at Nazareth. It is thus that St. Joseph is revealed to us—toiling faithfully, day by day, at the humble trade of a carpenter, providing for the child and His Mother. When at last his work was done he died, according to tradition, sometime before the marriage feast of Cana, in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Because of the rare beauty of his death, he is invoked as the patron of a happy death.

If one pauses to pass in review the whole earthly life of St. Joseph, he is able to discover therein no single gesture of grandiloquence to mar, for even an instant, the humble tenor of that simple life. The white spotlight is seldom upon him. The dramatic elements are wholly lacking. There are no flourishes of the band, no tumultuous cheering crowds dog his footsteps. He walks not on the mountain top before the eyes of the world, but labors humbly down below in the darkness and silence of the valley, away from the gaze of the world. And yet the Church honors St. Joseph as the Patron of the Universal Church—after Mary the greatest among the Saints of God. And why? Because of his humility, his holiness, his love, his patience, his sacrifice and self-denial.

#### *A Contrast*

When we read of Peter offering himself to the executioner to be crucified, head downward, not considering him-

self worthy to die like his Master; or of Francis Xavier, leaving all that life holds worthwhile to go as a missionary to win souls to Christ in far-off Hindustan, finally dying on a lonely isle in the South China Sea, with his arms outstretched to China, the land of promise, which he yearned so ardently to bring to the feet of the Crucified; or when we read of Ignatius of Antioch, who, rather than deny his faith, walked bravely into the arena to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, we are thrilled with admiration. We recognize, however, that they were chosen by Almighty God to do extraordinary works, and seem more appropriate models for heroic souls than for ordinary mortals like ourselves. But St. Joseph did only the common everyday work of the world. He is better suited, therefore, to serve as a model for the farmer in the field, the laborer in the factory, the clerk in the store, the student in the school, the father in the home—all doing the ordinary duties of everyday life.

#### *The Saint of the Commonplace*

St. Joseph may be said, therefore, to be the Saint of the Commonplace. He reached the heights of heroic sanctity, not by doing extraordinary things, but by doing the little ordinary duties of life supremely well. How fittingly he was chosen as the Patron of the Universal Church! For most of us, after all, are destined to do the ordinary, commonplace work of the world, humbly and obscurely. It is only the few who can scale the heights of extraordinary achievements to the accompaniment of the plaudits of admiring multitudes. But however lowly or obscure may be our lot, the life of St. Joseph teaches us that if we discharge the daily round of our simple duties supremely well, in the eyes of Almighty God we may be placed higher than the kings or generals or statesmen who strut in the center of the stage before the limelight of this world's gaze.

In the life of St. Joseph there is found inspiration for the great toiling masses of mankind. There is offered to all of us an antidote for the false philosophy of this world which looks upon a good deed as lost unless it attracts human attention and receives the plaudits of men. From a natural point of view, the words of the poet may be true, when he says:

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 2:18.

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

It is not true, however, from the supernatural or Christian viewpoint. For, every kindly deed, every holy thought, though witnessed by no human being, is seen by the all-seeing eye of God. Regardless of this world's praise or blame, He gives to every one his just reward.

#### *The Artist*

The story is told of an old man who approached the architect in charge of the adornment of one of the great Cathedrals of Europe and begged permission to do some work. The architect wishing to get rid of him, told him he could go up near the roof and carve upon one of the rafters. Day after day he labored up there in the semi-darkness. One day he did not come down. Going up they found him lying dead upon the scaffolding, his sightless eyes turned upward.

There upon a rafter they saw the face of Christ wrought with exquisite beauty and wonderful charm. Beneath it were inscribed the words: "God at least will see and understand." Artists and architects and the great men of earth, bared their heads as they recognized the superb master in him, whose ears were now deaf to all their words of praise.

There are times when a ray of light from a window falls upon this portion of the rafter. When it does, the guide points out to the visitors this face of wonderful exquisiteness, as the masterpiece of the Cathedral, which still thrills them with its appealing beauty.

Beneath every kindly word, or holy thought, or virtuous deed, done in the darkness or in the obscurity of the valley, where no human eye is witnessing, could be engraven with equal truth those words of the dead sculptor: "God at least will see and understand." And when the time of the great revealing comes, and the searching white light of eternity plays upon it, that good deed will stand uncovered before the eyes of all mankind to thrill them with its Christlike beauty. Perhaps some humble peasant from the fields, or lowly toiler in the factory will then be exalted above the lords of the earth, to occupy one of the highest places in Heaven.

That is what the life of St. Joseph teaches us in a striking manner.

#### *The Intercessory Power of St. Joseph*

Devotion to St. Joseph is a powerful means of obtaining favors, both spiritual and temporal. At the Council of Constance in 1416, when the legates of the Holy See, twenty Cardinals, two hundred bishops, besides large numbers of the doctors and theologians of the Church were gathered together to devise the best means to stem the tide of corruption then inundating the Church, there appeared before them Gerson, the learned Chancellor of the University of Paris. He pointed out that as St. Joseph was the guardian of Jesus on earth, he still remains the guardian of the Mystical Body of Jesus, which is His Church, and as his wishes were obeyed by Christ while on earth, so now, when he is in heaven, will his intercession still be granted. Gerson strongly counseled devotion to St. Joseph as the effective remedy. His counsel was accepted by all, as the counsel of one who had a mission from on high. Within a few years after the spread of this devotion throughout the Church, the schisms were healed and the troubles had all disappeared.

In practically every Catholic Church throughout the land there is a side altar dedicated to the Spouse of Mary. Before that altar or in the solitude of one's own home, or under the vault of the open skies, a person may appeal to St. Joseph for aid in life's struggle. The assistance which thousands of the faithful have secured through their devotion to St. Joseph in the overcoming of moral difficulties, is by its very nature not susceptible of external observation but can be vouched for by the introspection of the individual conscience. For the attainment of moral and spiritual values and the continued growth of the soul in holiness should be the supreme objectives in the life of every human being, rather than the gaining of merely temporal favors, which may have no real bearing upon the attainment of the individual's ultimate salvation, his eternal union with God in heaven.

There are instances, however, where the attainment of a temporal good has an obvious bearing upon the moral and spiritual life of the individual. In such case recourse may

well be had to prayer to supplement the individual's efforts to attain the same through the use of natural means.

So today in all the lands under the sun and in the islands out in the sea, four hundred million Catholics can exclaim as with a single voice: Holy Joseph, Guardian of Mary and the Infant Jesus on that long dark journey into Egypt, guard and guide us safely in the journey across this earthly life. And when our steps falter at the journey's end and the lengthening shadows fall, when life's fitful fever is o'er, and the angel of death comes to close our eyes, ah! then take us by the hand and lead us across the frontier of eternity into that heavenly Nazareth, where with thee we shall see the smiling face of Mary, and feel the embrace of Jesus, the Eternal King.

### Discussion Aids

Discuss the tendency that exists in human nature to honor greatness. When is St. Joseph's feast day? What do we know from the Scriptures about St. Joseph? Compare St. Joseph with Peter, Francis Xavier, Ignatius of Antioch. Discuss St. Joseph as the saint of the commonplace. How is he the inspiration for the toiling masses of mankind? Describe the happenings relative to St. Joseph at the Council of Constance. Sum up the reasons why the Church honors St. Joseph.

### Practices:

Pray to St. Joseph to protect the Church against her fearful modern enemies.

Say a Hail Mary in honor of St. Joseph every day for a happy death.

Recommend yourself to the intercession of St. Joseph when discouraged in your daily work.

## Chapter XLI

### PENANCE AND SELF-DENIAL: WHY?

#### *The Significance of and Reasons for Lenten Discipline*

"Lent is a relic from the Dark Ages. It is a shadow projected from the ages of gloom that falls athwart the sunshine of our modern life and happiness. As the Matterhorn that lifts its snow-crowned summit high into the skies of Switzerland intercepts the slanting rays of the setting sun and brings premature darkness to the little village nestling in the valley behind it, so Lent robs us of much of the brightness of social life and worldly amusement, casting prematurely across the noonday of our life the shadow of death and the hereafter. Its doctrine of mortification runs counter to the very grain of our human nature. It is a killjoy, an anachronism in our enlightened twentieth century. We want a religion of joy and gladness, not of gloom."

Such is the cry that we hear about us on every side—the cry of the epicurean, the cry of the cynic, the cry of the sophisticated, seeking through a thousand devious routes to find the Blue Bird of happiness. Is Lent really a barrier to our happiness? Is it the mere blind handing down of a custom from the hoary past, that has lost its purpose and its utility for our modern day? Let us face these questions frankly and fairly. For unless a person understands how the observance of Lent promotes his welfare and happiness he is not likely to enter into its spirit whole-heartedly.

#### *Example of Christ*

In the first place Lent is but the following of the example of Our Divine Saviour Himself. For, the Gospel tells us that immediately after His baptism in the Jordan and before beginning His public ministry, Christ went out into the desert and fasted forty days and forty nights. By action not less than by word He proclaimed to the people: "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." Unlike

our modern generals who send their soldiers out into the front-line trenches while they remain securely behind, Our Divine Master asks us to follow only where He Himself has led. For many centuries the Christian world followed the example of Our Saviour with a rigorousness which we today do not even remotely approximate. A few years ago I stood at the foot of Mt. Quarantana within the sight of the Jordan, where the Saviour spent forty days of fast. I saw the sides of the mountain studded with holes where anchorites had come to dwell and to follow literally the rigorous fast of the Saviour.

Until the ninth century but one meal a day was taken, and that at evenings. During the Middle Ages not only the theaters but even the law courts were closed. War was forbidden under penalty of excommunication. Every activity that might distract the minds of the Christians from the consideration of the condition of their souls and the attainment of their eternal salvation was prohibited. It has only been in recent times that the severity of the Lenten fast has been so greatly mitigated that now we experience but little hardship in its observance.

#### *Analysis of St. Paul*

Catholics do not observe Lent, however, merely because Our Saviour fasted, but because of the reasons which lie behind His command—to do penance as the necessary condition for salvation. We do penance for a twofold purpose. First, to atone for our past sins and to satisfy the temporal punishment due for them. Secondly, to strengthen our wills so as to prevent our falling in the future.

When psychology will have written its final chapter on human nature, it will be found that it has given us no more penetrating revelation of its conflicting duality than that which St. Paul disclosed to the Romans when he said: "I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members."<sup>1</sup> And to the Galatians he said: "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another: so that you do not the

<sup>1</sup>Rom. 7:23.

things that you would."<sup>1</sup> Because of this conflicting duality that lay at the very heart of his nature, he found himself yielding to the thralldom of the senses and to the imperious tyranny of flesh against the voice of reason and conscience so that he was compelled to exclaim: "The good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do."<sup>2</sup>

How aptly do these words of St. Paul reflect the experience of all mankind. Because of this duality in our nature we find a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde, a saint and a demon struggling for the mastery in each of us. In the last analysis it will be found that the whole purpose of all the exercises of the spiritual life is to emancipate the will from the tyranny of the flesh, to make it the ready servant of the reason and the conscience of man.

In order to secure such mastery, self-denial and self-discipline are necessary. The appetite which is always pampered, petted and indulged, becomes imperious and domineering. By denying oneself at times pleasures that are lawful we strengthen the muscles of the will, so that it will be more capable of resisting pleasures which are unlawful. That is why in Lent we are asked to give up some pleasures and amusements which are lawful in themselves. We thereby fortify the enthronement of our conscience and our intellect over our appetites and cravings. Then when the temptation comes we shall be able to stand unshaken.

#### *Promotes Happiness*

Strength of will which comes through self-denial and discipline is necessary to success in every line of endeavor—in literature, in science, in art, in commerce, in athletics. Look at the athletes who are training day after day on the cinder track. See those muscles of theirs, at first soft and flabby, change under the dint of daily discipline until they become as sinews of iron. So it is with the Christian, whose will at first soft and flabby gradually becomes like iron under the lash of daily discipline during Lent. This strength of will developed by spiritual exercises carries over into every department of life—making for success in scholarship, in athletics, in business, in life.

Not only does it make for success, but it makes for that

<sup>1</sup>Gal. 5:17.

<sup>2</sup>Rom. 7:19.



subjective correlate of success—happiness and peace of mind. True happiness is found not in the enslavement of the will to the passions, but in the enthronement of the conscience and the will over the appetites and the instincts of man. There is found that deeper and truer happiness which is not dependent upon external circumstances, but is found within—in the kingdom of the mind. Your entering generously into the spirit of Lent will have a far-reaching influence not only upon the success of all your manifold activities, but also upon your happiness and peace of mind.

Some time ago the students at the University of Illinois honored at a public mass meeting the young man who carried the colors of Illinois to victory at the Olympic games at Amsterdam by winning the welterweight wrestling championship of the world. After congratulating him upon his great achievement, I asked him how long he had trained for the contest. "Father," he said, "scarcely a day has passed in the last seven years that I haven't gone through some special exercise designed to prepare me for that encounter." No wonder that he was as hard as iron and steel and able to withstand the assaults of the best wrestlers among all the nations of the world. If men toil and discipline themselves through rigorous self-denial to win a race for an earthly prize, how much greater should be our zeal and earnestness in seeking to win the race of life that leads to a crown of imperishable glory!

#### *Christ's Self-Control*

If one will study with care the character of our Divine Saviour as portrayed in the Gospel stories, he will find it adorned in an eminent degree with all the qualities which have distinguished the illustrious heroes of the world. Wisdom, power, mercy and love shine forth luminously from His sublime personality. But as one studies that complex character at greater length and secures a more penetrating insight into it, he gradually becomes conscious that there is some subtle quality there, blending all these into a harmonious whole, which is lacking in the character of the great heroes of the world. There is no jar, no jolt, none of the strange inconsistencies that glare out at us from the lives of the secular heroes.

That quality is the Saviour's perfect self-mastery, self-control. Never for an instant in all the scenes of the Master's earthly life is there an incident wherein a rash, hasty, headstrong action mars the even tenor and the surpassing beauty of the Saviour's unfailing equanimity and perfect self-control. Washington's greatness bears ever the tarnish of his profanity and ill-temper. Napoleon's glory is dimmed by his uncontrolled concupiscence. But when on trial for His life before the court of Caiphas, when buffeted and spat upon by His executioners, even when stripped of His garments and nailed to the Cross, the Master shows no sign of anger or vindictiveness. Never for a moment does He lose that marvellous mastery of Himself.

That is one of the reasons why the name of Jesus stands out among all the names in human history—the solitary example of perfect self-control. As Richter has said: "The purest among the strong, and the strongest among the pure, Jesus lifted with His wounded hands empires from their hinges and changed the stream of centuries." He taught man the greatest of all arts—the art of self-control.

Self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control

In these alone lie sovereign power

Who conquers self, rules others

Aye, is lord and ruler of the universe.

#### *Essential for Success*

The person who would master the rudiments of the spiritual life must learn the lesson of self-discipline. It is one of the most essential elements for success in the earthly and spiritual warfare which we wage. The paths of life are strewn with the wrecks of men and women conquering others, mastering the arts, unlocking the secrets that lay hidden for countless centuries in the unfathomed bosom of the earth, only to fall victims to their own lusts, perishing in their own unconquered wilderness.

To me there is something tragically moving in the spectacle of Alexander the Great, subjugating Greece, conquering imperial Rome, extending his little kingdom of Macedonia over the known world, until he found himself in dis-

tant Ecbatana in Media, Asia, sitting astride his steed and weeping because there were no more worlds to conquer. Within a week Alexander the Great, conqueror of the world, making the earth tremble as his mighty battalion swept across Europe and Asia, lay dead in his tent, a victim to his own concupiscence—his unbridled passion for drink. Instead of sighing for new worlds to conquer, if he had but eyes to see, he would have perceived within himself a kingdom which stretched out as a huge jungle, untamed and unexplored. Alexander the Great will remain for all times as the classic example of the man who was able to conquer all the world, except himself—literally murdered at the very zenith of his greatness by his own untamed passions.

We need not go back to ancient Greece or Rome or Ecbatana, however, to witness the tragic wrecks of uncontrolled passions. Our insane asylums, our homes for wayward boys and girls, scream out at us their message of the frightful retribution meted out to those who allow their lust to subjugate their reason and their conscience. In the very bosom of our society are countless men and women in the untamed wilderness, of whose hearts there surge unchecked, wild, primæval passions, pulling them down slowly but surely to the level of beasts, and murdering everything in their nature that is God-like and divine. The ceaseless gnawings of remorse, the sapping of their manhood and virility by terrible diseases—these are the forebodings of the far greater punishments that await with inexorable justice the transgressors of the Divine law in eternity.

#### *A Dying Wreck*

One evening some time ago I was called to the bedside of a stranger, dying in one of the rooming houses for transients in the city. He had gone through all the stages of delirium tremens, and was a complete wreck. The doctor said that he had gone on one spree too many. For this one had caused complications, a ruptured blood-vessel, and his end was a matter of hours. Though only in middle age his hair was streaked with gray, and his face was heavily lined. Worry and dissipation were stamped unmistakably upon the scarred countenance. Heartbroken, he told me his story. Possessing a good education, he had risen to a high position with a rail-

road, when he contracted the habit of drunkenness. Losing his job after a prolonged fit of intoxication, he was ashamed to face his wife and children. He went from bad to worse, finally becoming a constant habitué of saloons in a large city.

After I heard his confession, he broke into tears, and his whole frame shook with sobbing, as he cried. "Father, I would have given anything in the world to have freed myself from this terrible vice of drink. It has brought shame upon my family whom I love more than anything in life. It has pulled me down into a living hell." I shall never forget to my dying day the look of desolating anguish akin to despair in his wistful eyes, as he lay there sobbing as though his heart would break.

As I left that bare drab room, with its dying victim, and came down the creaking stairs of the dingy rooming house, the scene haunted my mind. While hurrying home through the darkness of that winter night, illumined only by the distant stars shining as God's silent sentinels in the sky, I prayed that God might protect my students, my people, myself from a tragedy such as I had left behind. For that is the fate which awaits the boy or girl, the man or woman who allows any passion to grow unchecked, until it transforms him from a saint into a demon incarnate—the terrible tragedy of the man who is murdered, not by the hand of the assassin, but by his own brutal passions, slowly strangled to death by his own self.

The whole world watched breathlessly a few years ago the frantic struggle of men to free a victim from the jaws of Sand Cave in the Kentucky hillsides. But it resisted all the assaults of men and machinery, and clung to its victim until life was extinct. So, any passion—intoxication, lust, anger, jealousy—that is allowed to go unchecked, develops into a monster that clings to its victim until it strangles him to a physical and spiritual death. Worse than the fall of a meteor from the sky is the fall of a young man or a woman from the beauty and sunshine of God's grace into the foul swamp of uncontrolled vice. It is the most tragic note and the saddest that can be sounded in the whole gamut of human life.

*The Remedy*

What now is the remedy? Knowledge merely? "Quarry the granite rock," says Cardinal Newman, "with razors or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then you may hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passions and the pride of men." Not knowledge alone, but will power is needed. Self-control means strength of will applied to one's own conduct. How can will power be developed? Our Divine Master has given us the answer when He said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."<sup>1</sup> By daily discipline, daily self-denial, such as Lent brings to us. In no other way under the heavens can there be developed will power and self-control.

The same conclusion was reached by an altogether different method of approach by one of the greatest of all psychologists, William James, when he said: "Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day." Do something each day that is hard and more than is required in order that your faculty of effort, your will, may not become weak and atrophied through disuse. Thus strikingly does science reiterate and reenforce this age old teaching of the Church.

Before the eyes of a world, sick unto death with luxury and self-indulgence, the Church places during Lent the age old picture drawn by the Master Artist, Christ, of will power developed through self-discipline, of self-control achieved through acts of self-denial. Greater than Napoleon Bonaparte, than Julius Caesar, than Alexander the Great, the conqueror of the world, is the man who has learned through the instrument of a vigorous will to conquer himself. For self-control is the open sesame to success in this life and to eternal happiness in the next. All the after ages have but confirmed the wisdom of those words of an obscure Flemish monk, Thomas a Kempis, written in his monastic cell, at Zwolle centuries ago: "He who best knows how to endure . . . is conqueror of himself and lord of the world, the friend of Christ and an heir of heaven."

<sup>1</sup>Luke 9:23.

*"And Unto Dust. . ."*

In addition to the great lesson of self-mastery, Lent brings home to mankind the fickleness of the world's applause and its insufficiency to satisfy the hunger in the soul of man. On Ash Wednesday the Church seeks by a colorful and impressive ceremony to drive home to her children the transiency of this earthly life and the wisdom of seeking to attain the life eternal. The palms which were blessed on the previous Palm Sunday to remind us of the Saviour's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when the multitudes waved them aloft shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David", and strewed them in profusion on the road over which He rode—these palms the Church burns to ashes. Then summoning her children to the altar railing she places these ashes on the brow of each in the form of a cross, while she whispers in the ear of each the words of warning: "Remember man thou art but dust, and unto dust thou shalt return."

Why speak to youth in whose eager eyes there burn the fires of life, and on whose cheeks there rests the bloom of youthful vigor—why speak to them of dust and ashes, of death and the hereafter? Why lessen their zest for life and its pleasures? The Church thus speaks to them, not to lessen their zest for life, but to give them a sense of values. She shoves back the narrow horizon of youth, removes the veil from the senses, reveals the transient character of earthly things and points out the folly of seeking enduring happiness in that which is so ephemeral. The thought of death and the hereafter is salutary at times for old and young, for it prompts one to answer aright that supreme question which the Master addresses to each of us: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"<sup>1</sup>

The wholesome effect of a profound realization of the transiency of human life and human beauty is illustrated by an incident in the life of St. Francis Borgia. Francis was Duke of Gandia and Captain-General of Catalonia, and one of the most honored chevaliers at the Court of Spain. Isabella was known throughout Europe for her charm, her Spanish vivacity and for the striking beauty of her coun-

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 16:26.

tenance. Often had Francis braved death while carrying the banner of Aragon and Castile into the thick of the battle, knowing that he would be rewarded with a word of praise from his beloved Queen. He found his greatest happiness in basking in the sunshine of her smile and drinking in with greedy eyes her charming loveliness.

### *A Last Look*

In 1539 there fell to his lot the sad duty of escorting the remains of his beloved Queen to the royal burial grounds at Granada. In order to verify the body as that of Isabella, the coffin was uncovered. Eagerly Francis stepped forward to take one last lingering look at the beautiful countenance of his beloved Queen. He had no sooner done so than his face grew livid, his eyes wild with terror, as he shrank back. "No! No! Good God!" he cried, "it can't be! It can't be! Those eyes, that face, that smile! They can't have perished so utterly." What was the sight that greeted his eyes? A face of wondrous beauty? No. A face hideous and ugly in its putrefaction, the loathsome prey of worms and maggots pulling it back to dust and ashes. "God grant," cried Francis, "that I seek not to find my happiness henceforth in that flesh which perisheth so quickly, but only in that eternal Beauty which never knows decay." Francis devoted his services thereafter to a heavenly King, seeking as a humble missionary to win souls for Christ.

From the most beautiful face in all Spain, for whose look of approval soldiers faced death with a smile, to a sight so foul and loathsome as to fill the spectator with revulsion—what a change! Gaze at the most beautiful face you have ever seen, with eyes that speak like a rapturous symphony, with a smile that warms and endears, and in a few short years will you be able to overcome your loathing to gaze upon it when death has touched it with its finger of decay? "Remember man that thou art but dust, and unto dust thou shalt return."

We need not go back, however, to the sixteenth century for striking instances of the transiency of earthy fame and the fickleness of human applause. On March 4, 1917, I stood in a crowd of 90,000 people before the Capitol in Washington, to watch the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson into the

Presidency for his second term. His name was cheered on every side. A gigantic parade marched proudly before him in review. At the triumphant close of the World War when he sailed for France to dictate the terms of the Versailles Treaty of Peace, he had reached the eminence of world fame. His words about freedom and democracy and the autonomy of small nations had rekindled the hopes of all the oppressed nations of the earth. Unprecedented crowds greeted him at Paris with tumultuous cheering. The eyes of all the world were turned to him, as he stood on the pinnacle of human eminence as a new Moses, heaven-sent to lead the groping feet of the nations into the Promised Land of perpetual peace.

### *An Age-Old Cry*

A few years later I passed by a little home on H Street where lived a broken old man, unable to take more than a few steps with the aid of his cane. Broken in body, broken in mind, broken in heart, his League of Nations plan contemptuously rejected by the Senate, his opponent swept into office by the greatest landslide in history, the nations of Europe shaking their fists at him for deluding them with false hopes. What a pitiable spectacle! As he gazed out of his window at night toward the Capitol ablaze with light, the scene of his brilliant feats, what memories must have stirred within him!

One night, it is narrated, Mrs. Wilson happened to step into the parlor. The room was dark. Seated in a chair near the front window with his face resting in his hands she perceived her husband. There was the sound of a few broken sobs. Placing her hand tenderly upon the bowed head, she asked softly: "Are you ill, dear?" The former president raised his head and looked for a brief moment through tear-dimmed eyes toward the great shining Capitol that had resounded so often with his name. "No, not ill," he said, "but I realize now as never before the fickleness of the plaudits of the multitude and the emptiness of the glory of this world." As he sat there, broken in heart and alone, he tasted of that world weariness, that pang of the heart which caused Solomon in his old age to cry out: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity save in loving God and serving Him alone."



It was echoed again by St. Augustine, when after running through the whole gamut of sensual indulgence in pagan Rome, he cried out: "Our hearts have been made for Thee, O God, and they shall never rest until they rest in Thee." Such are the great eternal truths which Lent with its gospel of penance and self-denial drives home to a world that is forever tempted to find its happiness over the more beguiling but mistaken paths of ease and self-indulgence.

### Discussion Aids

Name some of the objections commonly made against the mortification of Lent. What is Lent? Upon what experience in the life of Christ is it founded? Sketch briefly the history of Lent. Why do Catholics observe Lent? Why is penance essential? How does it contribute to success in life? Discuss the example of self-mastery set by Our Lord. Show how the spiritual life is nourished by self-mastery. Give some examples of what follows from lack of self-mastery. Why, then, is the cross necessary? How does Lent serve in the part the cross has to play in our lives? Cite some of the examples given by the author that help us to realize the transitory character of all earthly grandeur and high position. Show how it is the purpose of Lent to bring this great truth to our minds.

#### *Practices:*

Be in earnest about fulfilling whatever Lenten penance you undertake. Don't be a Pharisee.

Try as a penance, that is most fruitful of results, curbing your tongue.

Perform some self-imposed act of mortification every day.

## Chapter XLII

### THE CHURCH AND TEMPERANCE

*An Apostle of Temperance  
Speaks to a New Age*

It is characteristic of every nation that it seeks to rescue from oblivion the memory of its illustrious men. We strive to stay the biting teeth of time and halt the swinging of her mowing scythe by enshrining the memory of our heroes in song and story, and freezing their likeness in sculptured granite and in enduring bronze. In obedience to that universal instinct the people of Ireland have enshrined in the nation's capital the memory of St. Patrick in the majestic Cathedral which bears his name. Outside on Sackville street, they have reared lofty monuments crowned with the figures of two of their great national heroes. One is the impressive monument to their great statesman, Daniel O'Connell, who played the leading role in the emancipation of Ireland from the galling yoke of English tyranny.

The other monument, a few blocks away, is to Father Mathew, the great Apostle of Temperance in Ireland. His right hand is held aloft as if exhorting his hearers to rise above the bondage of drink and to take the pledge of temperance. Some idea of the difficulty of his task may be gained from the fact that in that very city there rises the vast Guinness establishment, one of the largest breweries in the world. Father Mathew went throughout Ireland and preached the cause of sobriety with such burning zeal and convincing eloquence that people enlisted by the thousands under his banner. They became Knights of Father Mathew and pledged themselves to total abstinence from alcoholic liquor. He carried his crusade to America, and spread his organization for temperance throughout our land.

Today, outside of St. Patrick, few names are dearer to the Irish heart than that of Father Mathew. He will live not only in song and story, but in the grateful hearts of a grate-

ful people. To this day, when the little Irish boy walks along upper Sackville Street in Dublin, he gazes upon the figure of the great Apostle of Temperance with sentiments of love and reverence.

### *An Urgent Need*

That statue of Father Mathew with its silent plea for temperance symbolizes the need in America today. With the repeal of prohibition, breweries and distilleries are working night and day, seeking to flood our land with intoxicating liquors of every description. Drinking parlors, road houses, taverns, a new name for the old saloon, have sprung up like mushrooms overnight. Drive along any of our hard roads and you will see with monotonous regularity, every few miles, the sign, "Dine and Dance." One of the worst features of these taverns, worse than the old saloon, is their combining drinking with dancing. Each separately has its dangers, which are more than doubled when combined. Added to this is the sinister practice of hiring persons of shady morals to stimulate business in both these lines.

A painstaking survey was conducted by the University of Chicago of public dance halls, with hired hostesses, called taxi dancers. It showed that vast numbers drifted subsequently into lives of commercial vice and shame. Losing all sense of modesty and decency, they became willing victims for the most sinister traffic in civilization, that of white slavery. Aroused public opinion clamored for the extinction of such dance halls. Now they are being smuggled back by tavern keepers who seek to evade the law by going outside the city limits. Persons who frequent road houses or taverns of doubtful reputation, where agents ply patrons with drinks even to intoxication and corrupt their morals along other lines, will have an awful responsibility to answer for when they stand before the judgment seat of Almighty God.

Multitudes of people who opposed prohibition and voted for repeal are frankly disturbed over the turn events have taken. They fear the pendulum is swinging from one extreme to the other. The rapaciousness and greed of the liquor interests is once more in evidence. Standards of decency and public morality are openly flaunted. The same lack of foresight which made the old saloon so frequently a

den of vice, and resulted in the demand for its abolition, may again sour the American public against the liquor traffic. The problem of devising measures to curb abuses and to prevent the dispensing of liquor from becoming a source of debauchment to our citizens, and especially to our youth, is one of the most serious moral problems now confronting our nation.

### *A New Peril*

The problem takes on added seriousness from the marked increase in auto accidents. With the increase of speed in the new cars, and the increase in the number of intoxicated drivers, the number of accidents has reached new heights. Thus in 1934 the number of people killed by automobiles reached the alarming total of 36,000. Ten years previously cars brought death to 21,628. Since then, with but a single interruption, the number of killings has mounted steadily until at the end of ten years, almost 300,000 men, women and children have been slaughtered by the automobile. The number of persons injured in auto accidents in 1924 was approximately 1,000,000, and the total for the last ten years will run close to 10,000,000.

It may help one to grasp the significance of these appalling figures by stating that in 1934 one person was killed every 15 minutes and one was crippled or maimed every 31 seconds in automobile accidents. The casualty rate since 1934 has increased annually.

We think of war as the great killer of mankind, and rightly so. But the motor car in the hands of careless or tipsy drivers is running it a close race. Thus the United States lost 244,086 men from all causes in the World War. Of this number only 37,568 were killed in action. This means that in 1934 the motor car killed almost as many of our people as met death from action in the World War. It means likewise that in a ten year period the automobile causes more deaths among our people than the World War did, directly or indirectly.

### *The Church's Warning*

The most alarming feature of it all is that the death rate for 1934 shows an increase of 16% over the preceding year. Is it any wonder then that the Church cries out the solemn warning: The man who, while tipsy or semi-intoxicated,

undertakes to drive an automobile on a public highway endangers not only his own life and that of his passengers but menaces also the lives of other travelers as well. He will have an awful responsibility to answer for before the judgment seat of Almighty God. Common prudence and an elementary regard for the life and the welfare of others demand that a person should never undertake to drive a car on a public highway when he is even partially under the influence of liquor. One may be as guilty of murder with an automobile as with a revolver.

The Church is not an extremist. She does not condemn the use of liquor, but its abuse. Her ideal has not been prohibition but temperance. For individuals who, because of a peculiar type of nervous system or a defect of the will, cannot indulge with moderation, she counsels total abstinence. Drinking then becomes an occasion of grievous sin and should be avoided. "He that loveth the danger," says Holy Writ, "shall perish in it."<sup>1</sup>

The Church urges all young people to abstain completely until they are twenty-one. In the old days the pledge to this effect was given at the time of first Holy Communion in many parishes. Nowadays many pastors of long experience encourage young people to abstain from hard liquor until they are thirty. In the case of University students I would encourage complete abstention. While admitting the lawfulness of an occasional glass of beer or wine, it is entirely unnecessary for young people; and they would be better off and safer off without it. There are so many dangers at parties of drinking too freely, of not wishing to be outdone by others, a sort of false bravado, that it is infinitely better to abstain entirely. There are so many appetites, hungers, and urges born in our nature, which we have to struggle desperately to control, that it seems a pity to add still another which may get out of hand and wreck us in body, mind and soul.

#### *Evil of Intoxication*

The vice of intoxication consists in the fact that it stultifies man's reason and degrades him to the level of the beast. That immoderate drinking affects the intelligence is noto-

<sup>1</sup>Eccii. 8:27.

rious to all. Father Mathew was accustomed to illustrate its effect by the following story: Two men, both tipsy, were groping their way home one night. On coming to a corner lamp post, they began to argue. One said, "That's the moon." "No," said the other, "That's the sun." Finally, seeing a man approaching, they decided to have him settle the argument. They were too obfuscated to notice that he walked on unsteady legs. Looking up at the lamp post, the man surveyed it carefully and then, with knitted brow, said: "Gentlemen, you'll have to pardon me, I'm a stranger in these parts too."

#### *Artificial Craving*

One of the dangers of alcoholic drink lies in the fact that with most people it sets up an artificial craving; which demands more and more to satisfy its thirst. With some it mounts to a raging passion which overwhelms them and gives them no peace till it is satisfied. Before the individual can realize it, he has become a slave, bound hand and foot, to the most galling tyrant in the world. His sense of honor, of obligation to his family and friends, his oath of office, are all trampled under foot. He is more truly a slave than any prisoner with ball and chain in the penitentiary. The beast that is within us all gains the upper hand.

Some years ago I received a call at night to minister to a dying man. He was in a cheap lodging house downtown in the slum section of the city. After groping my way up a narrow stairs, I found him lying on a cot in a room that was almost bare. He was a man of about fifty, prematurely aged, his hair almost gray, and deep lines in his face. The pallor of death was on him, and he knew it. He had been on a prolonged spree, had gone through the throes of delirium tremens, an internal hemorrhage had occurred, and death was a matter of hours. I heard his confession and gave him the last sacraments.

"Father," he said, "I have a wife and family back home in Bridgeport, Connecticut. I had a good job until I lost it through drink. Rather than bring further shame and disgrace upon my family, I left home. I have been roving about since like a tramp, exiled from all my friends and from the family whom I love, because I could not overcome the passion for drink. Father," he said, as I was leaving, "I would give anything in the world if I could but start again, free from

this terrible habit which is pulling me down to a drunkard's grave."

If I could have gathered into that room all the young men and women who are starting the habit of drink, and have had them gaze upon the tragedy before me, a man wrecked in body, mind and soul, dying a drunkard's death, would they not ask themselves, "Is it worth while? Am I not better off without it?" As I went down the creaking stairs, out into the darkness of the winter night, the words of the dying man echoed in my ear. I prayed that God might protect my students and myself from the fate that had befallen him.

#### *Nerves: Ally or Enemy?*

One does not become a drunkard over night. Like all other habits, it develops slowly and stealthily through the frequent repetition of single acts. Finally a groove is formed in the nervous system, with the result that a physiological thirst and a mental craving for alcoholic liquor are begotten. When one first detects the beginning of such a craving, he should recognize it as a danger signal. It is saying then: "The nerve cells are no longer neutral. They have developed an artificial thirst, and whether you are thirsty or not they are clamoring to be satisfied. Pretty soon, they will be ruling you, instead of you ruling them." That is what the victim of every habit speedily learns. He has abdicated the sovereignty over his own life in favor of some habit which has sunk its tentacles deep into his nervous system. It is no longer what his mind and will and conscience decree, but what his nerves decree that counts.

Probably no one else has depicted so clearly the neurological basis of habit and has pointed out so vividly the ethical implications of habit formation as has William James. In his classic chapter on *Habit*, he says:

"The physiological study of mental conditions is thus the most powerful ally of hortatory ethics. The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates,

good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its ever so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time!'

"Well, he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work."

#### *Is It Worth While?*

Each separate act sets up a tendency to be repeated. Since this is particularly true of the young in whom new habits are most easily formed, it is important for every youth who is starting the practice of drinking to ask himself: Is it worth while to expose myself to the danger of becoming an habitual drinker with its menace to my physical, intellectual and moral welfare? Am I not better off to preserve my present freedom from the tyranny of such a habit that has spelled disaster to countless men and women? I have nothing to gain and everything to lose. Why then should I run such a needless risk?

Social pressure is doubtless responsible for much of the drinking of young people. They go to parties where drinks are passed around. They feel that social custom and the spirit of good fellowship require them to indulge. They do not wish to assume the "holier-than-thou" attitude, or to appear out of step with their friends, or to throw a "wet blanket" on the gayety of the party. Provided moderation is observed, no blame can be attached to social drinking.

The danger lies in the fact that the indulgence may easily pass the bounds of moderation under the temptation to outdo one another in conviviality and in so-called fun making. A second danger is that there may be enkindled a craving which will later drive the individual to extremes. This seems to be true particularly of persons of a certain type of nervous temperament which quivers with restless-



ness until the constantly expanding craving is completely satisfied. This leads to the tragedy of habitual intoxication.

#### *A. Dangerous Transition*

The stealthy manner in which occasional social drinking passes over into habitual private indulgence is illustrated in the following incident. "Father," said a young man to me recently, "I never dreamed that I would develop a passion for liquor. I never drank until after marriage. Then we began to attend parties where it was the custom for all to take a few highballs as an expression of good fellowship. At first I did it only under the compulsion of social custom. Gradually a liking for it developed. I began to take a bottle or two along in the car with me, as I am a traveling salesman. Then I made the great mistake of my life. *I began to drink alone.* While waiting for the man I was to see, I would take a drink or two to relieve the dreariness of a long wait.

"Before I realized it, the habit had a grip on me which I could not shake. Like all toppers, I imagined every one else was tipsy except myself. Then reports began to reach my employer that I was slipping, that I was becoming wobbly and unsteady. I had the fight of my life to quit. The craving tortured me and I suffered the agony of the lost. Thank God! I finally won. But if I could utter one warning to the youth and the men of America, it would be: Avoid the habit of drinking alone. It will get the best of every one.

"Social drinking is dangerous enough, but *private drinking is fatal.*"

#### *The Safe Course*

The Church encourages all young people to take the pledge until they are twenty-one. The advent of prohibition has interrupted a custom that was widespread in the parishes of America—the custom of administering the pledge to children at the time of their first Holy Communion. Now with the repeal of prohibition, this custom might well be renewed. Even after reaching the age of twenty-one, it is highly praiseworthy to continue total abstinence. The health of the body, mind or soul does not require alcoholic indulgence. In the judgment of the writer, this is the safer and the wiser course for the majority to follow. If some indulgence is desired, it might well be confined to beer and light wines, to the com-

plete exclusion of hard liquor loaded as it is with dynamite and with latent tragedy.

If a person has become a victim of the habit of intemperance, then he should wage ceaseless war to exterminate it. He should avail himself of the valuable assistance which medical science affords. In addition, he should have recourse to prayer, mortification, and the frequent reception of Confession and Holy Communion. If a person elicits the strong and sincere purpose of amendment which the valid and fruitful reception of Confession requires, he will find that the frequent reception of this sacrament will put the axe to the root of his sinful habit and speedily eradicate it. The proper disposition of amendment implies the avoidance of all the near occasions of his previous downfalls.

The Church says with confidence therefore that the person who really wants to wean himself of this vicious habit will find in the frequent reception of Penance and in frequent, even daily, Holy Communion a remedy of unfailing effectiveness. No person can maintain that he is sincere in his professed desire to conquer the habit of intemperance if he remains away for long periods of time from the sacraments which Christ instituted for his rescue and regeneration. Sincerity implies the willingness to use the means necessary to achieve an end. A refusal to do so brands one as patently insincere.

#### *"Take Heed to Yourselves"*

In conclusion, the Church holds before the people of the world the great ideal of temperance. To all to whom temperance might prove difficult to maintain, she counsels the safer path of complete abstinence. She urges young people to preserve the innocence of their youth unsullied by the habit of drink. She thunders in the ears of the mature the mighty mandate: "Be temperate or abstain altogether."

She asks that when you ride along the hard roads, and see the innumerable taverns with their signs, "Dine and Dance," that you think of that other sign which symbolizes the great moral need of America today—the figure of Father Mathew with his right arm raised aloft exhorting the people to take the pledge of temperance. It is the symbol of power and self-control, the symbol of voluntary, not compulsory, abstinence from drink. That figure of the Great Apostle of

Temperance we hold up before the eyes of the people of America. On its pedestal we write the words of the Divine Master of Nazareth, Jesus Christ Himself: "Take heed to yourselves lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness . . . and that day come upon you suddenly."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Luke 21:34.

### Discussion Aids

Who was Father Matthew? Describe some modern conditions in regard to drinking that call for a modern Father Matthew. Give a few figures in regard to fatalities of automobile traffic, many of them resulting from "drunken driving." What is the attitude of the Church on the use of liquor? What is her advice to all young people? What is the basic evil of intoxication? Discuss the artificial craving created by the use of alcoholic drink. Explain how the habit of drinking is formed, and the part the nerves play in the process. Quote William James on "Habit." When should one start to hinder the formation of the habit? What is to be said of social pressure on drinking? What of private drinking? What is the safe course? How should one try to eradicate the habit of intemperance? What unfailing help has the Church to offer? Discuss the ideal of temperance.

### Practices:

Study yourself and decide whether you can be temperate or whether you *must* be a total abstainer.

Never drink alone.

Take refuge in the very frequent reception of Penance and Holy Communion.

## Chapter XLIII

### DOES THE CHURCH SERVE HUMANITY?

#### *An Answer to the Charge of Indifference to Human Needs*

"The Catholic Church has her head up in the clouds. With her eyes fixed on heaven, she is so intent on worshipping God that she forgets humanity. Let her monks and nuns cease mumbling meaningless prayers to dusty alabaster saints and come out of their cloistered monasteries and minister to the needs of humanity. Instead of prating about happiness to be found in a distant heaven, far beyond the roof of the sky, let them bring heaven down to earth by feeding the hungry, teaching the ignorant, caring for the sick, and pouring oil into the festering sores of a suffering world. What the twentieth century wants is not a religion of the supernatural but a religion which serves humanity."

Thus shouted a socialist orator from his soap box in Hyde Park, London, where speakers solve with dispatch the large problems of the world. I can see him still—swarthy, eager-eyed, gesticulating with evident sincerity. As I stood not long ago in a motley crowd of several hundred listeners, I could not help but feel that the soap-box orator was expressing frankly, perhaps a bit brutally but with essential accuracy, the dominant philosophy of the age. It was a distorted echo of the refrain that I had been hearing sung back home in America at the various service clubs. "He profits most who serves best." "We build." "We serve humanity." These are their various mottoes, articulating their common philosophy of human service. More euphonious are they than the utterance of the soap-box orator with his bitter invectives and violent gesticulations, but the emphasis is substantially the same.

That this is a correct interpretation of the social pulse of today is further evidenced by the fact that the poem which a few years ago received the largest number of votes for

best expressing the dominant social ideal was the poem of Sam Walter Foss, breathing the religion of humanity. It is called *The House by the Side of the Road*, and runs:

There are hermit souls that live withdrawn  
In the peace of their self-content;  
There are souls, like stars, that dwell apart,  
In a fellowless firmament;

There are pioneer souls that blaze their paths  
Where the highways never ran;—

But let me live in a house by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man.

#### *A Different Scene*

As I listened to the soap-box speaker condemn the Church for having her head up in the clouds and not ministering to the needs of suffering humanity down on the earth, the sight of the motley street crowd gradually faded away. In its place there came another and a different scene.

It is a scene at Louvain, Belgium, in the spring of 1863. Joseph de Veuster, known in religion as Brother Damien of the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, is sitting alone in his room. He is nearing the completion of his studies for the priesthood. He has made a brilliant course. There opens up before him the pleasant prospect of the chair of philosophy in the famous University of Louvain. His brilliant talents presage an equally brilliant future. He sees himself solving the vexing problems of philosophy, receiving the plaudits of admiring multitudes. Europe is reechoing with the fame of his learning and scholarship. It is a roseate vista and pleasant to contemplate.

Suddenly the expression on his face changes. The smile has died away. A serious look creeps into those blue eyes of his. What is that he hears now? Not the plaudits of admiring multitudes. It is a still small voice reminding him of a news item he had read a few days ago. It told of 600 abandoned lepers on the distant island of Molokai pleading for a priest to bring to them the consolation of religion in their dire extremity. For a moment he is bowed in prayer. Then he rises, offers himself to his superior for the mission of Molokai, and is accepted. He hastens over to Tremeleo where his gray-haired mother is anxiously awaiting the great event of his approaching ordination.

#### *Voices from Molokai*

Entering the old homestead he takes his mother in his arms and kisses her. Then, holding her out before him, he says: "Mother" . . . his voice falters. . . . "Mother, I have come to tell you that soon I shall have to say . . . good-bye . . . forever." The mother's face grows pale. "What joke is this her little boy is playing on her?" she wonders. For a son always remains in the eyes of his mother a little boy, no matter how tall he grows. "Is he not to be ordained shortly to labor as a professor at the famous University of Louvain, here in our beloved Belgium where he can at least be close to me? Is he not to be the staff for my declining years, my joy and my pride?" Such are the questions which are arising in her mind. "Mother," he says, "God has spoken to me this morning through the voices of 300 lepers on distant Molokai. Soon I shall sail for that little island in the Southern Pacific, ten thousand miles from our beloved Belgium, never to return. There I shall labor among God's unfortunates till He sends His angels to summon me home to you."

There was a lump that formed in her throat and a spirit of rebellion rising in her heart. "What!" she exclaimed to herself. "Have I not done enough in giving up my boy to the priesthood, and now God would take him from me forever? He shan't. I won't give him up." In that brief moment she saw the loneliness that would be hers through all the future days. The sun had seemed to fall from out the sky. For, he who was her sunshine and her happiness was to be taken from her forever.

A gentle voice whispers in her ear: "He that shall lose his life for my sake, shall save it."<sup>1</sup> That voice drove back the rising spirit of revolt. Pulling herself together she put her hand upon the head of her son and said: "Joseph, my son, you are all that I have. But I give you up to go to minister to the lepers at Molokai. Pour oil into their festering sores, drive despair from their aching hearts, dry the tears in their eyes, and bring the gentle Christ to them in their suffering. Go, as a priest of God, and . . . God's blessing be upon you."

#### *A Noble Ministry*

For twenty-four years Father Damien labored among

<sup>1</sup>Luke 9:24.

the lepers at Hawaii and Molokai. With his own hands he built their chapel, erected little cottages for them, dressed their ulcers, and bandaged their festering sores. Among these unfortunate sufferers cast out from the bosom of their own homes as "unclean" and banished to the lonely island of Molokai as a menace to society, Father Damien, a man of culture and refinement, found no task too menial, no service too exhausting for him to render. Out across those 3000 miles of the blue Pacific people were happy and gay and free from care. But those pleasures could never be theirs.

When the demon of dark despair threatened to gain the upper hand in the midst of their ceaseless pain, Father Damien bent low over their bedsides and spoke words of hope and of the promise of the Master's infinite reward. To their waning spirits he brought new strength in the heavenly manna of Holy Communion. At last, as a result of dressing the sores of the lepers, Father Damien himself became afflicted with the loathsome disease. For three years it gnawed ceaselessly—till his body was a mass of festering sores.

His death bed scene I shall never forget. It was portrayed with vivid realism at the International Missionary Exposition at the Vatican in Rome in 1925. Father Damien is lying propped up in bed. That face of his once so beautiful and fair—now swollen and distorted, a mass of running sores. One turns away almost instinctively from the gruesome sight. But kneeling close about his bedside are those who do not turn away. They are the abandoned lepers for whom he has given his life. For within and beneath that mass of festering flesh they know there is the soul of one of God's noblemen. Their lips are moving in prayer. There is a tear in their wistful eyes, and their hearts are heavy. For they know they are losing the best friend that God has ever given to them in this world.

Father Damien, scholar of Louvain, docile to the gentle promptings of his holy Catholic faith, had become the servant of the abandoned lepers of Molokai. Like the hero that he was, he remained at his lonely post of duty in the far Pacific, fighting against overwhelming odds for these outcasts of humanity until death ended the unequal struggle. The world knows him simply as Father Damien. But to the lepers of

Molokai, his name hangs over the islands as a benediction from on high. Lepers on their death bed whisper his name with the name of the Master he served so well.

### *A Princely Gift*

The scene changes. It has its setting in a hall of one of our large universities. Educators from all over the country have been in attendance at a convention of the National Education Association. A group of them, gathered about an open fireside, are relaxing over their pipes from the strain of the formal sessions. One of them holds in his hand a newspaper carrying the headline: "Rockefeller Gives More Millions to Chicago University." He becomes the subject of a eulogy from the members. "This donation," observes Professor Mitchell, "brings the amount he has given to Chicago University to the princely total of over forty millions. Rockefeller will go down in history as the most generous benefactor of education in America."

"You must not forget Andrew Carnegie," remarked Dr. Fordyce. "He has built hundreds of libraries throughout the land and has given some thirty millions to Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh." "Well, let's compromise," replies Prof. Mitchell, "and agree that John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie are the two greatest benefactors of education in America and indeed in the world." "That's a fair conclusion," agreed Dr. Fordyce, "no chance for an argument there."

A momentary lull followed the apparent settlement of the question. "Gentlemen," observed Father Cronin, the President of a Catholic University, who was attending the convention, "may I present another view? I do not disparage in the slightest the great contributions of Rockefeller and Carnegie to education. They are worthy of all praise. But the greatest benefactors? Well . . . I wonder. Would I surprise you if I were to express my conviction that the greatest benefactions made each year to education are made by Catholics, but pass unheralded by our newspapers, unobserved by men? I know a Catholic workman, Joseph McInerney, an engineer on the railroad, who owns merely his own little home, but who has given more generously to the cause of education than John D. Rockefeller or Andrew Carnegie."

A look of surprise mingled with incredulity spread over the faces of his listeners. "That sounds like an extravagant



statement," continued Father Cronin as he observed their baffled amazement. "Light up your pipes," he went on. "Let me undertake to prove it in my own way. I think I can. But I will make you the gentlemen of the jury and allow you to decide." Father Cronin then narrated the following true incident, the circumstances of which had come within his own observation while he was a pastor of souls.

*Like Tendrils On a Vine*

After Joseph McInerney had saved some of his earnings he was united to a lovely girl in the sacrament of matrimony. God blessed their union with that most wonderful of all gifts, a little babe, without which a home seems to be only a house, empty and hollow. When scarcely a week old, they took her to the priest and had her christened the beautiful name of Mary, after the Mother of God. That little babe is the dearest thing they have. When the father comes in from the grinding locomotive, tired and toil-worn, those little baby eyes smile up into his, and her little chubby hands play about his wrinkled face. He forgets all about his fatigue as he basks in the tender love of this innocent little angel that God has given to him from the invisible places of that other world. She has twined about his heartstrings as the tendrils of an ivy vine twine about the branches of a stalwart oak. She has become part and parcel of his life.

Then in His inscrutable wisdom, God called the mother to Him. Her last words, as she lay dying, were: "Joe, be good to Mary." And so Joe played as best he could the roles of both father and mother to Mary, and their lives grew still more closely intertwined. With his rough calloused hands he ministered to her ever so tenderly. He even learned to sew for her. A new delicacy found its way into his awkward fingers as he tucked her safely in for the night. That element of a mother's tenderness had some how stolen into the rugged heart of the father, showing itself in all his ministrations for her, as a vein of purest gold steals at times into a mountain-side and runs through strata of the hardest flint.

In spite of his hardships and sacrifices, the years went by all too quickly. Mary has grown into the flower of young womanhood, beautiful and fair and innocent as the angels that minister before the great White Throne. The dreams, the hopes, and the ambitions of that father are all wrapped

up in his little girl. Sometimes his run takes him out at five o'clock in the darkness of winter mornings. As he steals out so softly, how tightly he hugs his dinner pail, lest even its rattle disturb his sleeping child. With his hands clenching the throttle, withstanding the snow and the sleet and the cold, he guides the great iron monster safely along. But amid all the roar of his thundering locomotive and the grind and the cinders and the smoke, his eye is clear and something like a smile plays about his face. For he is thinking of Mary. In planning for her happiness the drudgery of the long hours at the throttle is transformed into a labor of love.

*For Forty Millions?*

Mary has finished high school at the Sisters' academy now. As the father comes home one evening, Mary greets him as usual with a kiss. Taking his rough, toil-worn hands in her soft, white ones, she whispers: "Daddy, I've a secret to tell you!" There is a serious look in her large blue eyes. The father thinks she is more beautiful than he has ever seen her look before. "What is it, my dear?" he asks. "Daddy, I'm going . . . to leave you," she says, "to take the white veil of the Sisterhood."

Her voice falters. There is a twitching of the muscles about her mouth. The father turns his face away in an effort to hide the tear that has welled up in his eye and to drive away the lump that has formed suddenly in his throat. The bottom has fallen out. Everything seems empty and hollow. Darkness . . . emptiness . . . futility are clutching at his sinking heart. In that brief moment the father has a foretaste of the loneliness and the silence of the house that will be his through all the future days. Could you get that father to part with that girl for a million dollars? For forty millions? Not for all the gold in Solomon's mines would that father part with his only child. Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, she is the sunshine of his life, the staff of his declining years.

The father hears a gentle voice whispering in his inner ear: "Whatsoever you do to the least of these my children, that do you also unto me." It strengthens him and gives him courage. He pulls himself together. With his coarse homespun sleeve, he wipes the tear from his eye. Turning toward Mary, he places his hand upon her head, and with a husky-

ness in his voice, he says: "Mary, dear, you are all that I have. But . . . I give you up, Mary, to go as a white-robed Sister to teach the little children the word of Christ. Go . . . and God's blessing be upon you." The piano is silent. The lilting sound of Mary's voice is heard no more. There is a loneliness and an emptiness about the home. The father's footstep is heavy. His smile has died. For she who was his sunshine and his happiness is gone.

#### *The Jury's Verdict*

"Has that father given as generously to the cause of Christian education as Rockefeller or Carnegie?" asked Father Cronin as he finished his narrative. "Has he not given more than John D. Rockefeller or Andrew Carnegie ever dreamed of giving? They gave a portion of their wealth, but he gave the most precious treasure in life—his only child." His audience was visibly touched. Expressions of skepticism had given way to those of understanding and appreciation.

"As foreman of the jury," spoke up Professor Mitchell, "I can tell you, Father Cronin, that you have presented a convincing case for your client. Mr. McInerney has given the greater gift, the more princely benefaction. More no man could give. You have removed a veil from our eyes, Father Cronin, and given us a new insight and a new understanding of contributions to education to which we, like most other Americans, have been singularly blind. Some time the people of our country will see and understand and voice their appreciation in no uncertain terms. The traditional American spirit of justice and fairplay will assert itself and see that you receive recognition for the valuable contributions you are making to the enrichment of our democracy in the field of education."

The scene which Father Cronin described so vividly is one which is occurring in a thousand homes in the cities and in the countryside throughout our land. Fathers and mothers give their dearest and most beloved to take the white veil of the sisterhood and the black cassock of the priest for the great cause of Christian education and human service. Some, they send forth to teach the little children to love their country, their fellowmen and their God. Others, they send forth to minister, as gentle angels of mercy, to the sick, the

suffering, and the lowliest of God's children. There is no form of human misery for the alleviation of which the Church has not established a special agency. Everywhere she has established hospitals for the sick, orphanages for the little children bereft of the care of father and mother, institutions for the incorrigible and delinquent, and homes for the friendless.

#### *Ministers to Every Need*

For the aged, standing in the twilight of life's eventide, who oftentimes are made to feel as though they were no longer wanted in the homes of their own children, grown now and married, the Church has reared hospices where gentle Sisters make pleasant and smooth their reclining years. For the reclamation of fallen womanhood, scorned by society as social outcasts, she has founded Homes of the Good Shepherd where chaste virgins win them back to a life of virtue and honor. For the little children, she rears schools where holy nuns teach their lips to lisp for the first time the sacred names of Jesus and Mary, and set their feet in the pathway of virtue. Speak to the veteran of the Civil War and he will tell you that no memory of the great conflict comes back to him that is not colored with the vision of the Sister of Charity bending low over the wounded, cooling their brow and moistening their parched and burning lips.

Nowhere is the Christ-like character and genius of the Church more strikingly illustrated than in the fecundity with which she has established sisterhoods, congregations, and religious orders to minister specifically to every type of human need. No institution in the world has been so potent as the Church in lifting the race up from the foul morass of barbarism and selfishness to a high plateau of altruism and service. As Richter says so beautifully of Christ: "The purest among the strong, and the strongest among the pure, Christ lifted with his wounded hands empires from their hinges and changed the stream of centuries." Similar is the testimony of a modern scholar, Eugene Savage, professor of art at Yale University and winner of the *Grande Prix de Rome*: "All that separates the white race from barbarism is the contribution of the Christian Church."

No wonder it was that in an address to the faculty and student body at Yale University, George Wharton Pepper,

United States Senator from Pennsylvania, expressing the conviction of millions of thoughtful citizens, paid the following striking tribute to the Catholic Church as the fosterer of education: "I am profoundly convinced that the time is not far distant when all men who think clearly and logically will understand that the highest use to which the human mind can devote itself is the contemplation of God and man's relations to Him. When that time comes, I am certain that a hymn of thanksgiving will well up from the heart of America to the Catholic Church, which through misrepresentation and calumny and slander, and in spite of the most powerful opposition, has always held that great ideal before the minds of the people, has always made God and His Christ the basis and foundation of education."

#### *A Mighty Exemplar*

The rich stream of healing charity and humanitarian service which the Church has been pouring for ages into the aching wounds of society is being increasingly recognized by men of discernment. Not long ago a professor at the University of Illinois said to me: "Father, I am a non-Catholic. For many years I have been a regular attendant at the services of my church. I sing a hymn, listen to the minister preach for forty minutes, then take my hat and go home—until next Sunday. But of late," he said, "I find a spirit of discontent and rebellion against that passive conception of religion growing within me. Religion should mean more than the singing of a hymn and the listening to a sermon."

"Your Church," he continued, "has given us a better conception of religion. You don't merely preach about charity and service, but you exemplify it. You go out and build schools where your sisters teach the little children the truths of religion, you build hospitals where you minister to the sick and the dying, you erect orphanages, homes for the aged, Homes of the Good Shepherd, where your sisters minister to all the needs of afflicted humanity. Your Church has reached up and taken the abstract ideals of Christian charity from the empyreal blue of the sky and woven them into flesh and blood. You have institutionalized them and made them functional. Protestant though I am, I take my hat off to the Catholic Church which has taught the world the real meaning of Christian charity and humanitarian service."

In the words of this eminent scholar, there is echoed the conviction of every impartial student of history and of every discerning man and woman today. From the day when her divine Founder, Jesus Christ, died on the cross that men might live the more abundant life, down to the present day when she sends forth her sons and daughters to pour oil into the festering sores of an aching world, the Catholic Church has been the great exemplar of unselfish devotion to mankind. Today, in a world that worships the ideal of human service, but is none too generous in its practice, she speaks in the only language intelligible to all the race, the Esperanto of concrete deed. Across the horizon of the skies of the world she writes the promise of her divine Founder, which has been both her mainspring and her lodestar through the ages: "Whatsoever you do to the least of these my children that do you also unto me." When the mists of religious prejudice fade before the sunlight of understanding, our fellow citizens of every faith will find that in the Catholic Church they have a tireless servant in the cause of education, a generous dispenser of charity and mercy, and a mighty exemplar of humanitarian service who inspires her children not to talk about service but to render it.

#### Discussion Aids

What are some of the common charges brought against the Church as failing to serve humanity? Tell the story of Father Damien's service to humanity. Contrast the contribution made to education by Rockefeller and Carnegie and that made by Joseph McInerney. How does the Church minister to human needs? Discuss at length. Give examples.

#### *Practices:*

Contribute according to your means to the support of your parish.

Drop an occasional coin in the poor box.

Help according to your ability some Catholic charity.



## Chapter XLIV

### A FINAL WORD

You are now familiar with the chief doctrines and practices of the Catholic religion. You have seen how Christ founded the Catholic Church and, giving her complete jurisdiction over the divine deposit of truth, commissioned her to teach His truths to all mankind. She alone traces her origin back to Christ. She alone received from Him the power and the authority to teach and to minister in His name. She alone possesses the marks of unity, sanctity, Catholicity and Apostolicity—the marks which will guide the wanderer to the Church of Christ. The evidence that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Jesus Christ is so clear that even he who runs can read.

Knowledge alone, however, is not enough. It is necessary to reduce knowledge to action, to translate one's conviction into life and conduct. It is time now to cease being a mere passive spectator, to leave the side lines to enter the Church of Christ and to avail yourself of the sacraments, the divinely established means of sanctification. Cast aside now all doubts and misgivings. Christ cannot deceive us. Christ cannot fail us. Neither can He be outdone in generosity. If you are generous in your trust and faith in Him, He will not fail to give you the light to see the truth and the strength to follow it.

Let no worldly considerations deter you from following the voice of your enlightened conscience. The breaking of old ties, the leaving of old moorings may entail a temporary hardship, a brief nostalgia. But such is frequently the price of progress. In your new home, peace and serenity will fill your heart and you will taste of that peace which the world cannot give. For a slight and temporary cross you will gain an eternal crown.

Love is diffusive of itself. Tell others of the joy that is yours. Show your gratitude to Almighty God for the grace He has given to you by bringing each year another soul into

the Church of Christ. You will prove your love for others most effectively by sharing with them your greatest treasure on earth—your holy Catholic faith. You will be among that shining galaxy of noble souls of whom Daniel, the prophet, said: "They that instruct many unto justice shall shine as the stars for all eternity."<sup>1</sup>

You are called to be not merely another Catholic, another member in the vast army of more than four hundred millions of men and women who in every land find shelter under the mighty expanse of St. Peter's dome. You are called to be an exemplary Catholic whose life squares with your faith. You are called—as indeed are all Catholics—to be a saint of God, a just and holy man or woman, who proclaims your Catholic faith through the irresistible eloquence of a virtuous and noble life. This is the language which all mankind can understand, and the music which never fails to win the hearts of men.

<sup>1</sup>Dan. 12:3.

### Discussion Aids

Sum up what you have learned from studying this text. Why is knowledge of the truth not enough? What means of sanctification did Christ in His inestimable love leave us that we might share His divine nature? Does He expect us to be saints? Is it possible for all to be saints? How can we best proclaim that the Catholic Church teaches the truth?

#### Practices:

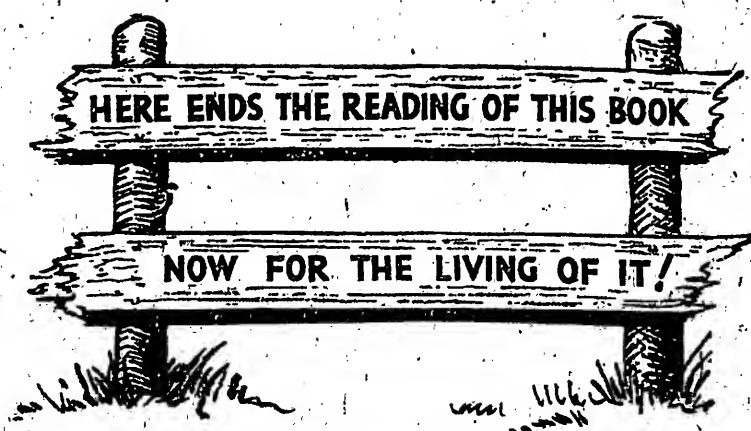
Thank God fervently that He has made you a member of His Church. Be an ornament to the Church.

Know that the sacraments are the instruments by which Christ welds us to Himself, and use them.

Meditate on the tremendous power of good example and try hard always to give good example.



APPENDIX



## APPENDIX

### COMMON PRAYERS

#### *The Sign of the Cross*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

#### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

#### *Hail Mary*

Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

#### *The Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

#### *The Confiteor*

I confess to Almighty God, to the blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the Saints, that I have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word, and deed, *through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.* Therefore I beseech the blessed Mary ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all the Saints to pray to the Lord our God for me. Amen.

*An Act of Faith*

O my God, I firmly believe in Thee and in all the sacred truths which the Catholic Church believes and teaches because Thou hast revealed them Who canst neither deceive nor be deceived.

*An Act of Hope*

O my God, I firmly hope in Thee and trust Thou wilt grant me pardon of my sins, grace to observe Thy Commandments faithfully in this life, and the glory of paradise in the next, through the merits of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

*An Act of Charity*

O my God, I love Thee with my whole heart and soul above all things because Thou art all-good and deserving of my love and for Thy sake I love my neighbor as myself. Mercifully grant that, having loved Thee here on earth, I may love and enjoy Thee forever in heaven. Amen.

*An Act of Contrition*

O my God! I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

*Memorare of the Blessed Virgin*

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that any one who fled to Thy protection, implored Thy help, or sought Thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful; O mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions; but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

*Hail, Holy Queen*

Hail, Holy queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope; to thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

*The Blessing Before Meals*

Bless us, O Lord! and these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Grace After Meals*

We give Thee thanks for all Thy benefits, O Almighty God, Who livest and reignest forever; and may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. I am the Lord, thy God . . . Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor thy father and thy mother.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

## THE SIX PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

1. To keep the Sundays and Holidays of Obligation holy, by hearing Mass and resting from servile works.
2. To keep the days of Fasting and Abstinence appointed by the Church.
3. To go to Confession at least once a year.
4. To receive the Holy Eucharist during the Eastertime.
5. To contribute to the support of our pastors.
6. Not to marry persons who are not Catholics, or who are related to us within the third degree of kindred, nor privately without witnesses, nor to solemnize marriage at forbidden times.

## EXPLANATION OF THE MASS

*Beginning of Mass*

As soon as the Priest and his Ministers enter the Church, the choir begins the Introit, or entrance Psalm, which is appointed for the feast, or the day, and may be found in the Missal.

The Psalm (xlii) is omitted in Masses for the Dead and during the last two weeks of Lent, as its spirit is one of joy, and not of sadness.

The Mass is a solemn repetition of that act which our Blessed Lord performed at His last supper, when He consecrated His sacred Body and Blood, and commanded His Apostles to do the same: "Do this in remembrance of Me" (I Cor. xi, 24).

The word Mass—in Latin, "Missa," or "Dimissio" (Dismissal)—has been applied to this sacred function, because in the first ages of Christianity, through reverence for the sacred mysteries, the "discipline of the Secret" was observed. At that time only those who were fully instructed were allowed to be present at the

Sacred Mysteries. The Catechumens (those under instruction) were dismissed before the Offertory, and the Faithful themselves were sent away at the end of the liturgical action by "Ite, Missa est," or some equivalent expression. At other functions all might remain, but at the Holy Sacrifice none except the initiated might be present. Hence it was known as the Dismissal Service, or the Mass. This derivation is given by St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, A. D. 430; by St. Avitus, Bishop of Vienne in France, 521; and by St. Isidore, O.S.B., Bishop of Seville, 636.

At Mass the Priest represents and speaks in the person of our Blessed Lord at the last supper; hence the vestments and the ceremonies are such as tend to bring vividly to our minds that solemn rite and His sacred passion, of which it was the type. The *amice* represents the cloth with which our Blessed Lord's eyes were blindfolded; the *alb* is the white robe in which Herod put Him to scorn; the *girdle* and *maniple* are the cords with which He was tied to the pillar, and was scourged; the *stole* is the rope thrown over His neck when He was taken in the garden, and when he was led to execution; the *chasuble* is the soldier's cloak thrown over His shoulders in Pilate's court, and it has the pillar embroidered in front; and the cross which He carried to Calvary on the back. The altar, with its tabernacle and crucifix, recalls both the table of the last supper, on which He first consecrated His sacred Body and Blood, and also the hill of Calvary, where He consummated His sacrifice.

The candles that are lighted are used out of reverence and honor to the Sacred Mysteries, and remind us of the time when the covenant of the New Testament was first accomplished.

#### *Confiteor*

By some authors the "Confiteor" is attributed to Pope St. Damasus, 384. Some of the great orders of the Church have the privilege of adding the name of their Founder or Father. When the Priest says the "Confiteor," he substitutes "vobis, fratres" for "tibi Pater." At the word "culpa," the breast is struck in imitation of the publican (Luke xviii, 13).

The Priest goes up to the altar while saying the first of the following prayers; he then bows down and says the second.

St. John, in his vision in the Isle of Patmos, 95, "saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God" (Apoc. vi, 9). In the early ages the altars were often the actual tombs of the saints, or were built over them. Pope St. Felix I, martyred 275, made a decree that Mass should be said on the tombs of the martyrs. Some relics of saints are now always inserted in every altar-stone. Out of reverence to the altar and its relics, the Priest kisses it when he says, "whose relics are here"; and at solemn Mass he incenses it.

#### *Introit*

The Priest then goes to the Missal, and reads the Introit, which is proper for the day or the Feast, and which should have been already sung by the Choir. The Introit here given is from the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, on the First Sunday after Pentecost.

#### *Kyrie*

These Greek words were introduced into the liturgy at an early period. The present ninefold invocation is attributed to Pope St. Gregory the Great, O.S.B., A. D. 604. The first three invocations are addressed to God the Father, the second three to God the Son, and the remaining three to God the Holy Ghost. In High Mass the Choir begins to sing the "Kyrie" as soon as it has finished singing the Introit.

#### *Gloria*

This magnificent hymn of triumph takes its name from the opening words, which are those by which the Angels announced to the shepherds at Bethlehem the birth of our Blessed Lord (St. Luke ii, 14). It dates from the earliest days of the Church, when it was used in the Office of Lauds. Pope St. Telesphorus, martyred 139, ordered the first portion, as it existed in his time, to be sung at the midnight Mass of Christmas. It was drawn up, word for word, as it now is, before the Council of Nice, 325, and Pope Symmachus, 514, extended it to all Sundays and Feasts, but its use was restricted to Bishops. Bernon, the Benedictine Abbot of Reichnau, 1048, obtained permission for all Priests to say it. As it is preeminently a song of joy it is omitted in Mass for the Dead; and also in Lent, Advent, etc., unless the Mass is that of a Saint. In High Mass it is intoned by the Priest, and then sung by the Choir.

The Priest kisses the altar and, turning round, imparts to the people the blessing he has received. If a Bishop celebrates the Mass, he here says, "Pax vobis" (Peace be to you), instead of "Dominus vobiscum."

#### *The Collect*

The prayer which is said after the Gloria is called the Collect. It varies according to the day or feast, and generally has special reference to the occasion. It is called "Collect" because the wishes or wants of the faithful are collected and expressed in it. The number of Collects said varies according to circumstances. The Collect is sung or said aloud, with the hands extended in a suppliant manner, as was done in the first centuries, and is depicted in the Catacombs.



*Epistle*

After prayer has been offered for the people, a portion of sacred Scripture is read for their instruction. It is so generally taken from the Epistles in the New Testament that the word Epistle has become its accepted term. When it is taken from any other book of Scripture it is called a Lesson. In high Mass it is the duty of the Subdeacon to chant the Epistle. Pope St. Alexander, martyred 119, made a special decree for portions of the Sacred Scripture to be read.

*The Gradual*

The Epistle is followed by some verses of Sacred Scripture—generally from the Psalms—which are appropriate to the day, the feast, or the season of the year. This part of the liturgy has various names. The verses which are sung during the whole year, except from Septuagesima till Trinity Sunday, are called the Gradual, because the Cantors who sang them used to stand on the *Gradus*, or steps of the Ambo or Pulpit, from which the Epistle and Gospel were formerly chanted.

From Septuagesima till Easter, the portion of the Gradual which consists of the Alleluias and the verse between them is omitted, and several other verses are added, and are chanted slowly to a prolonged tone, and are therefore called the Tract, from *tractus*, "lengthened out." During Paschal time, that is from Holy Saturday till Trinity Sunday, both Gradual and Tract are omitted, and the verses that are sung are called the "Alleluia," from the more frequent use of this word. On some great feasts a rhythmical composition, called a Sequence, is sung.

*Munda*

Having finished the Epistle, the Priest goes to the middle of the altar, bows down, and asks for grace worthily to read the Sacred Gospel. In the meantime the server (or at solemn Mass the Subdeacon) removes the Missal from the Epistle side to the north or Gospel side.

In solemn Masses the Priest omits the "Jube," etc., and reads the Gospel to himself in a low voice. As soon as he has finished it, the Deacon presents to him the incense to be blessed that, out of reverence for the Sacred Scriptures, he may incense the book of the Gospels before he chants the portion for the day. He then asks God's blessing by saying the "Munda"; and taking from the altar the book of the Gospels, which he had previously placed on it, he kneels and asks for the Priest's blessing, who gives it in the second person instead of the first.

*Gospel*

When the Priest sings the heading of the Gospel, he makes

the sign of the Cross on the book at the first words of the Gospel; then on his forehead, lips and heart, in token of his belief in, and open profession of, the Gospel, and of his desire that it should be in his mind, on his lips and in his heart. The Gospel varies according to the day or feast. In solemn Masses the Deacon chants the Gospel with much ceremony. The Subdeacon holds the book of the Gospels resting on his forehead, the Acolytes with their lighted torches, which are emblems of the Light of the Gospel, stand on each side, and the Deacon, after he has signed himself with the sign of the Cross, as above, three times incenses the sacred text. At the end of the Gospel the Subdeacon carries the book to the Priest, who kisses the Gospel to show his acceptance of it, saying: "Per evangelica," etc. He is then thrice incensed by the Deacon. Pope St. Alexander, martyred 119, commanded parts of the Gospel to be read.

*Sermon*

The usual, and the natural, place for the sermon is after the Gospel. St. Justin Martyr, 167, says that it was the practice in his day to read portions of the Sacred Scripture, and then explain their meaning and their application (Apol. i, 67). The sermon is generally preceded by the "Notices" of deaths that have occurred during the previous week, by publication of Banns of Marriage, and of the services of the ensuing week. The acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and Contrition are also frequently read here, to insure their being said by the ignorant and negligent.

In the early times of the Church, as soon as the sermon was ended, or in the absence of a sermon, at the end of the Gospel, the Catechumens, or persons still under instruction; the Energumens, or those troubled with unclean spirits; the Lapsed, or those who had openly denied the Faith; public sinners not yet reconciled, and Jews and Pagans, were dismissed, and the Mass for the Faithful began with closed doors. St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo 430, says: "After the sermon the Catechumens are dismissed; the Faithful will remain" (Serm. 237).

*Credo*

After the Catechumens, etc., had left the Church, those who remained made a profession of their faith. Until 325 the only Creed in use was the Apostles' Creed which, as we are informed by St. Cyril, Patriarch of Jerusalem 386, and by St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, 397, was never written down, lest it might fall into the hands of the Pagans, but was faithfully committed to memory. When the divinity of our Blessed Lord was assailed by Arius, the first General Council of Nice, 325, was assembled, and the Divine Nature was defined more minutely. Later on in the same century, the divinity of the Holy Ghost was denied by Mac-

donius. The Bishops of the East immediately assembled together at Constantinople, 381; the new heresy was condemned, and additional words and phrases were inserted in the Creed that had been drawn up at Nice. The words "Filioque" were inserted by some Churches in Spain between 400 and 589. They were afterwards approved by the Pope, as they did not express any new doctrine. The Greek Church refused to accept them, through a misunderstanding; both the Latins and Greeks believed the same, but each attributed to the other a doctrine which was not held by them. The general Council of Trent, 1564, made some grammatical alterations, but the Creed is still called the Nicene Creed. In the first ages the Creed was not sung, but was recited aloud by all the faithful. It was sung at Constantinople, 510; in Spain, 589; in France and Germany in the eighth and ninth centuries; and in 1014, Pope Benedict VIII, at the earnest request of the Emperor St. Henry, ordered it to be sung in Rome. The Creed is not said or sung every day, but on all Sundays and great Feasts, on the Feasts of our Blessed Lady, of the Apostles, Doctors and also of St. Mary Magdalene, because her faith did not fail at the crucifixion.

#### *Offertory*

The Offertory varies according to the day or feast, and should be sung by the Choir.

#### *Offering of the Host*

Having recited the Offertory, which formerly consisted of the whole Psalm, and was chanted while the people made their offerings "in kind," the Priest removes the chalice veil, and takes the pall from the paten. The veil here mentioned is made of the same material as the vestment, and is sufficiently large to cover the chalice when thrown over it. The paten is a small circular plate of gold, or of silver gilt, on which is placed the altar-bread that is to be consecrated. The pall is a small square of pure linen, stiffened with starch or cardboard, to cover the chalice so that nothing may fall into it. The Priest then takes in both hands the paten with the altar-bread, and, holding it somewhat elevated before him, he says the prayer, which was adopted from the Mozarabic or Spanish rite. In solemn Mass the Subdeacon puts on a broad humeral veil, with which he covers the chalice, etc., and carries them to the altar, where he delivers them to the Deacon. The latter then presents to the Priest the paten with the altar-bread.

#### *Pouring in the Wine and Water*

Going to the Epistle end of the altar, the Priest pours into the chalice the wine that is to be consecrated, and which must be the pure juice of the grape, as such was the wine used by our Blessed Lord. He also puts in a very small quantity of water, as such was

the practice of the Jews; and St. John tells us (xix, 34) that when our Lord's side was opened with the spear, there issued forth blood and water. Pope St. Alexander, martyred 119, made the mixing of the water obligatory. In solemn Mass the Deacon pours in the wine, and the Subdeacon puts in the water. In ordinary solemn Mass the Subdeacon takes the paten, and holding it under the humeral veil, he stands in the middle at the foot of the altar steps until it is wanted. This ceremony is omitted in Masses of the Dead. This prayer, also, is found in the Mozarabic rite.

#### *Offering of the Chalice*

Having returned to the middle of the altar, the Priest takes the chalice with both hands, and raising it up, he makes the offering of the wine that it to be consecrated. The prayer is taken from the same rite as the previous one. He then places the chalice on the corporal, or linen cloth on which the Body of Christ is consecrated, and covers it with the pall, to prevent anything from falling into it. In solemn Mass the Deacon helps to elevate the Chalice, and says the prayer with the Priest.

These beautiful words are taken from the prayer of the Three Children in the fiery furnace (Dan. iii, 39), and most aptly express the sentiments of the priest, as he bows down and acknowledges his own unworthiness, and his fear at presuming to approach to make an offering to the infinitely holy and just God.

Raising and extending his arms, he invokes the Holy Ghost, that He, who wrought the Incarnation, would deign to bless the elements, through which the same Lord God will become present on the altar.

#### *Blessing the Incense*

In solemn Mass the Deacon here presents the incense to the priest that he may put some into the thurible, and asks him to bless it saying: "Benedicite, pater reverende"—"Please to bless, Reverend Father." The Priest does so with the accompanying prayer. On other occasions, as at the Gospel, etc., he blesses it thus: "Ab illo benedicaris ✠ in cujus honorem cremaberis"—"Mayest thou be blessed by Him in whose honor thou shalt be burnt."

While incensing the *oblata*, he says the prayer "Incensum."

He then incenses the crucifix on the altar, the relics, and the altar itself. The offering or burning of incense has ever been regarded as most appropriate for divine worship. It cannot be otherwise; for God Himself (Exod. xxx, 1) commanded Moses to make a golden altar, and to offer incense upon it every day. He also prescribed the kinds that were to be employed, and under pain of death forbade the like to be used for profane purposes (Exod. xxx, 34, 38). David begs that his prayer may be directed as in-

cease in His sight (Ps. cxi, 2). And St. John says: "The smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God, from the hands of the Angels" (Apoc. viii, 4).

The Priest says the words, "Accendat," etc., when he returns the thurible to the Deacon. The latter then incenses the Priest, and all the sacred ministers in the sanctuary. The same mark of respect is shown to the faithful, out of reverence to the priestly character and the dignity of being a Christian.

#### *Washing the Hands*

Although the Priest washes his hands before he puts on the sacred vestments, he now washes his fingers, that they may be free from dust when touching the Blessed Sacrament. Till the fifteenth century, this washing of the fingers took place in the Roman Rite immediately after the "Oremus" of the Offertory. But, as in solemn Mass the fingers are often soiled by the chains of the thurible, this is the most appropriate place for the ceremony. There is also a mystical meaning to this function. "This signifies," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, A. D. 386, "that our souls must be purified from all sins and wickedness. For as the hands are the instruments of action, the washing of them shows the purity of our desires" (Cat. iv). The "Gloria Patri" is omitted in Masses for the dead and during Passion time.

As the ceremony of washing fingers takes place at the side or end of the altar, the Priest now returns to the middle, and bowing down he makes earnest appeal to the Blessed Trinity, through the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Man-God, and through the merits of the Mother of God and the principal Saints, and of those (*istorum*) whose relics are here, to receive the offering, which he has made. Although this prayer is not of such antiquity as some of the others, it is found in the Illyrian Missal, and is supposed to date as far back as the seventh century.

The Priest kisses the altar, as is generally prescribed before he salutes the people, and turning around he asks them to unite their prayers with his for the above intention. The "Orate" has been attributed to Pope St. Leo the Great, A. D. 461.

The people at once by the mouth of the server, or of the sub-deacon, comply with the request. This appeal is very ancient; it differed somewhat in various places. The present form dates from the thirteenth century.

#### *The Secret Prayer*

The Priest now reads the prayers which are called "the Secret Prayers" from being said in an inaudible tone of voice. They correspond with the Collect, and generally contain some reference to the sacrifice.

#### *Preface*

These are the concluding words of the Secret. Here he does not kiss the altar, nor turn around to the people. These words occur in all the Liturgies of both East and West. The "Sanctus" of the Preface is sung by the Choir; at one time the Priest sang it with the people. The prophet Isaiah (vi, 3), tells us that the Seraphim cried out these words one to the other. And St. John (Apoc. iv, 8) says that the four living creatures rested not day nor night from thus honoring God. The latter part has reference to our Blessed Lord, and is not sung till after the Consecration.

#### *Common or Ordinary Preface*

This Preface is said on festivals and other days that have not a proper one, and in all Masses for the Dead. In the Roman Missal it is placed after all the other Prefaces. There were formerly numerous Prefaces, but about the 11th century they were reduced in Rome to nine; two others were afterwards added. In the Greek Church there is only one Preface. The use of the Preface in the Mass is of Apostolic origin.

As its name signifies, it is the introduction to, or preparation for, the most solemn part of the Mass, the Consecration. The bell is rung at the "Sanctus" to let the people know what part of the Mass is being said, since in the immense churches abroad, as in the old English Cathedrals and Abbeys, a great portion of the congregation could not see the altar.

#### *The Canon of the Mass*

This portion of the Mass has its name from being a part which has always been an unchanging rule by which the celebrant was to be directed, and which was not subject to the discretion of the priest or bishop even in those early days when much was left to their prudence. The meaning of *canon* is "rule." It consists of that part of the Liturgy which commences with the words "Te igitur," etc., down to the words "Per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen," just before the Lord's Prayer. But latterly the Canon is considered to comprise the Lord's Prayer, and to extend to the prayers at receiving the Chalice and the Ablutions inclusively. This prayer is attributed to Pope St. Clement, martyred A. D. 100.

#### *Commemoration of the Living*

After having prayed for the Church at large, and for its head, and for his own bishop in particular, the Priest now prays for those living for whom he himself wishes to pray, or who desire to be recommended to the prayers of the faithful. Formerly the names of all those who were entitled to special mention were here read.



aloud. In solemn Mass this was done by the Deacon from the altar steps, or from the ambo. In low Mass the Priest himself turned around and read the names from the Diptychs, or pieces of parchment twice folded, like a writing portfolio. The names were written in three columns. In the first were inscribed the names of the holy martyrs who had openly died for the faith, and who were thus said to be *canonized*, that is, worthy of being named in the *Canon* of the Mass. This was the primitive mode of canonization. In the second column were written the names of those who were eminent among the living, as the Pope, the Bishop, benefactors, etc. In the third were written the names of those who had departed in communion with the Church, but were not otherwise remarkable.

Some slight alteration is made in the "Communicantes" and in the following prayer, "Hanc igitur," on a few great festivals; it can be found after the Preface for the feast. With the exception of our Blessed Lady, none but martyrs are here mentioned; St. Linus, 77, St. Cletus, 89, and St. Clement, 100, were the immediate successors of St. Peter in the Holy See; Thaddaeus was another name of the Apostle St. Jude. The exact date of the martyrdom of some of the Apostles is a little doubtful. St. John, who was the last survivor of them, was thrown into the vessel of boiling oil in 95, and died in 100. St. Sixtus II, 258, and St. Cornelius, 252, were also Popes. St. Cyprian was bishop of Carthage, and was martyred, 258. St. Laurence was the famous Deacon of Rome, broiled on a gridiron, 258; his head is still preserved in the Holy City. St. Chrysogonus was martyred, 305. SS. John and Paul were officers, martyred, 362, under Julian the Apostate. SS. Cosmas and Damian were Arabian brothers, who suffered, 303, under Diocletian.

The "Communicantes" was inserted by Pope St. Siricius, 398. St. Mathias is not mentioned, as he was not an Apostle at the time of the Passion; but the number twelve is made by St. Paul, who is always united with St. Peter in the mind of the Church.

As in the Old Law (Exod. xxix, 10; Lev. i, 4) the Priest spread his hands over the head of the victim, so does the Priest in the New Law extend his hands, during this prayer, over the elements that are to be consecrated. A bell is rung to give notice to the faithful.

St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, 397, has the two prayers which immediately precede the Consecration, and the two which immediately follow it, almost letter for letter, as they are now found in the Canon, and he quotes them as being taken from the ancient rites. The present form of words, *diesque nostros*, etc., is attributed to Pope St. Gregory the Great, O. S. B., 604; but Amalarius states that they were substantially contained in the Canon of the time of St. Ambrose, which was two hundred years

earlier. The prayer "Quam oblationem" has come down from the Apostles themselves.

### The Elevation

Our Blessed Lord's words to His Apostles at His Last Supper were very precise: "Do ye this," etc. (Luke xxii, 19). The principal circumstances are here narrated, and, as each is mentioned, it is fulfilled. At the words, "took bread," the Priest takes the bread into his hands; when he says, "with his eyes lifted up," he raises his eyes to heaven; he bows his head when "giving thanks," and when he says "blessed," he makes the sign of the cross over the bread, and then resting his arm on the altar, while silence reigns throughout the church, he pronounces the words of Consecration in the person of Christ. He immediately kneels in adoration, and then elevates the Sacred Host for the homage of the people; and having placed it on the altar, he again venerates it. The bell is rung to make known to all that the Consecration has taken place. Although the breaking and giving to the disciples are mentioned before the words of Consecration, the Consecration of course took place first, and this order is observed in the Mass. The same exactness is observed in the Consecration of the Chalice, and the bell is again rung when the precious Blood is adored and elevated.

These prayers date from the Apostolic age. Crosses made before the Consecration are symbolic of blessing, or are so in reality; after Consecration, as the words "Hostiam Puram," etc., they merely point out that the Sacred Victim who suffered on the cross is now on the altar.

In the second prayer the words, "sanctum sacrificium, immaculatam Hostiam" were added by Pope St. Leo I, 461, and refer to the Blessed Eucharist, which is the true sacrifice that was prefigured by the offerings of Abel, Abraham and Melchisedech.

The Angel that is referred to in the prayer "Supplices," is the Angel of great council. When beginning this prayer the Priest bows down low; and when saying "ex hac altaris participatione," he kisses the altar.

Reference has already been made to the "Discipline of Secret," by which the knowledge of the great mysteries was kept from all but those who are fully instructed. The necessity for thus guarding from profanation and blasphemy the "holy things of religion" is fully proved by the *graffiti*, or scribbling on the walls, discovered among the ruins of Rome, Pompeii, etc. Yet the teaching of the Church concerning the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament in the earliest ages is abundantly proved. St. Justin Martyr, 167, in his apology says that our ordinary food "is changed into the Eucharist by the word of God, and by prayer." Tertullian, 245, says that Christ "made the bread his body by the words, 'This is my



body." St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, 397, says: "The change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood takes place the moment the words of Christ are pronounced; before the consecration it is bread, but when the words of Christ are added, it is no longer bread, but the Body of Christ." St. John Chrysostom, 407, the glory of the Eastern Church, writes: "What do you say? The Host is in his hand, the angels are present, so are the archangels; the Son of God is there; all attend with the greatest awe." Yet there are writers who wish to be considered learned, and who say that the doctrine of the Real Presence was not believed till the middle ages, because it had not been dogmatically defined till then, when it became necessary to do so in consequence of the false teaching of Berengarius about 1050. As well might it be said that the divinity of our Blessed Lord was not held till the fourth century, when it was first authoritatively defined in the Council of Nice, 325, in order to destroy the heresy of Arius.

#### *Commemoration of the Departed*

In early ages the priest here read from the Diptychs the names of the departed for whom prayers were requested, in the same manner as he prayed for the living at the beginning of the Canon. At present he prays for them in secret by inserting their names, or mentally recalling them, before the words, "Ipsis, Domine," etc. Of the practice of praying for deceased members of the Church, a non-Catholic author (Rev. J. M. Neale) writes: "I am not going to prove, what nothing but the blindest prejudice can deny, that the Church, east, west and south, has with one consentient and universal voice, even from Apostolic times, prayed in the Holy Eucharist for the departed faithful." This practice necessarily proves the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. For, if the souls of the departed are in heaven, they do not need prayers; and if they are in hell, they cannot be helped by them. There must, therefore, be some other place, namely purgatory, where prayers can avail them, and where they can be purified until they have paid the last farthing, when they will be admitted into heaven.

Bowing down and striking his breast, the priest prays that he may be united with those who have shed their blood for Christ. He says the first three words aloud, to show that he prays also for others, and to incite them to pray for themselves. The saints whose names are here mentioned are St. John the Baptist; St. Stephen, deacon and first martyr; St. Mathias, Apostle, chosen to fill the place of Judas, and martyred in Colchis; St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, devoured by lions at Rome, 107; Pope Saint Alexander, martyred 119; St. Marcellinus, priest, and St. Peter, exorcist, who suffered together in Rome, 304; St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas, matrons, who suffered at Carthage, 202, and whose names were

inserted by Pope St. Gregory the Great, O. S. B., 604; St. Agatha and St. Lucy were Sicilians and virgins, the former being put to death, 251, and the latter, 307; St. Agnes, whose feast was formerly a holiday in England, was martyred, 305; St. Cecily, patron of music, suffered, 230; and St. Anastasia, who is commemorated in the second Mass of Christmas Day, was burnt, 304.

The Priest here thrice makes the sign of the cross over the chalice and the Host conjointly; and then, uncovering the chalice, he thrice makes the sign of the cross over the Precious Blood with the Host, and twice between the chalice and himself. He then, whilst holding the Host over the chalice, slightly elevates them, whilst saying, "Omnis honor et gloria." This is now called the minor elevation; at one time it was the only elevation, and the sacred species were raised sufficiently high to be seen by all present. But after Berengarius denied the Real Presence, about 1050, a more decided elevation of each species was made immediately after the Consecration, as protest against his heresy, and as an act of reparation and of faith. Strictly speaking, the Canon ends here.

#### *Pater Noster*

This short introduction to the Lord's Prayer is attributed by some to St. Cyprian, Archbishop of Carthage, martyred, 258, and by others to St. Gregory the Great, O. S. B., 604.

The version of the "Pater noster" which is here used is the more complete one, and is given by St. Matthew (vi, 9). As none but those who were fully instructed were present, the prayer was said or chanted aloud. At the office where the catechumens were present, only the first and the concluding words were said aloud; and this remnant of the discipline of the secret is still occasionally observed.

In solemn Mass the Subdeacon, towards the end of the "Pater," takes to the Deacon the paten, which has been entrusted to him at the Offertory. He also takes off the humeral veil, with which he had covered it. After the "Pater noster" the Priest takes the paten in his right hand, and at the words "da propitius pacem" he signs himself with the cross, kisses the paten, and places it under the Sacred Host. He then uncovers the chalice, genuflects, and divides the Sacred Host into two portions, from one of these he breaks off a small part, which he retains in his right hand, and holding it over the chalice he finishes the prayer. This part of the Mass, beginning with the "Pater noster," is a preparation for receiving Holy Communion. Before the 11th century each priest was at liberty to insert the names of any saints he pleased after that of St. Andrew. This practice is no longer allowed.

The Priest here makes three signs of the cross over the chalice with the small portion of the Sacred Host.

*Agnus Dei*

The small portion of the Sacred Host is here put into the Precious Blood, and the chalice is covered with the pall. The word "consecrated" in this place has always been understood to mean the putting together of two holy things; not a blessing or setting apart for religious purposes. The priest inclines himself and strikes his breast each time he says "Agnus," etc. The "Agnus Dei" was ordered to be sung at Mass by Pope Sergius I, O. S. B., 701; but the custom of saying it must have prevailed in many places previous to this, because we find very clear allusions to it in works and liturgies of a much earlier date. In Masses of the Dead, instead of "Miserere nobis," is said "Dona eis requiem"—"Give them rest", and at the last time is added, "sempiternam"—"eternal rest." The breast is not struck in these Masses.

Bowing down, with his hands joined and resting on the altar, the Priest makes his immediate preparation for receiving Holy Communion. These three prayers, which have been in use for the last 800 years, are addressed to our Blessed Lord present on the altar. His salutation to His Apostles after His resurrection was "Pax vobis"; and peace was one of His last gifts to them. He is now reminded of this, and the Priest prays for the peace of the Church, and begs that his own sins may not be an obstacle to peace being granted. This prayer is omitted in Masses of the Dead.

In solemn Masses the kiss of peace is now given to the sacred ministers. During the previous prayer the Deacon has been kneeling at the right of the Priest; he now arises, and both he and the priest kiss the altar. Formerly the Priest kissed the Blessed Sacrament itself. The Deacon by an inclination salutes the Priest, who places his hands upon the shoulders of the Deacon, bends forward over his right shoulder, and says, "Pax tecum"—"Peace be to thee." The Deacon replies, "Et cum spiritu tuo," and after having again saluted the Priest by an inclination, which is acknowledged in like manner, he imparts the kiss of peace to the Subdeacon in the manner in which he himself receives it. In early times the actual kiss of peace was received and given by all, for all who were present intended to receive Holy Communion. Formerly the sexes were separated in the Church, and the kiss of peace was given throughout the whole assembly. This practice continued till the time of Pope Innocent III, 1216. When the kiss of peace is given to others besides the sacred ministers, a metal plate, on which the crucifixion is engraved, and which is called the "Pax" or the "Osculatorium," is generally used.

In the second prayer the Priest appeals to our Blessed Lord, and entreats Him, through His sacred passion, to cleanse him from his sins, and not to suffer him to be separated from Him.

The motive of this third prayer is that solemn warning of St. Paul, who was miraculously instructed in the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament by our Lord Himself: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (1 Cor. xi, 29).

Taking the Host in his hand, he says the words, "*Panem coelestem*," which are taken chiefly from the Psalm cxv.

Holding the Blessed Sacrament in his left hand with the paten beneath it, and striking his breast with his right hand, he bows down, and thrice says the words of the humble centurion, "*Domine, non sum dignus*," etc. (St. Matt: viii, 8). The first four words he says aloud, and the server rings the bell.

Standing erect he takes the Sacred Host into his right hand, and while he says "*Corpus Domini*," etc., making with It the sign of the cross on himself, but not allowing It to touch him, he bows down, and resting upon the altar reverently receives It.

Having received the Sacred Host, he uncovers the chalice—if it is solemn Mass the Subdeacon uncovers it—and genuflects. He then with the paten collects any particles that may have fallen upon the corporal, and puts them into the chalice, while saying the first part of the prayer, "*Quid retribuam*."

At the word "*accipiam*," he takes the stem of the chalice with his right hand, and holding the paten with his left, that he may catch any particle of the Sacred Species which may fall, he finishes the prayer.

Signing himself with chalice in the same manner as he did with the Host, and saying, "*Sanguis Domini*," etc., he receives the Precious Blood.

*Communion of the Faithful*

If any of the faithful desire to receive Holy Communion, they kneel at the altar rails soon after the "*Domine, non sum dignus*." As soon as the Priest has received the Precious Blood, he covers the chalice, and the Blessed Sacrament is taken out of the tabernacle, unless it has been consecrated at Mass. The server then says (or, in solemn Mass, the Deacon chants) the "Confiteor." It is seldom that any of the laity, or even of the sacred ministers, receive Holy Communion at High Mass, as it is a most strict law of the Church that, out of reverence to the Blessed Sacrament, those who receive it must be fasting from midnight. Therefore all who can do so go at an early Mass. This rule of fasting is only broken in order to give the Holy Viaticum to those who are in danger of death, and who cannot otherwise receive it. Until the sixth century all present at the Holy Sacrifice received Holy Communion. In early times there were no special prayers for the Communion of the

Faithful; but as the practice of administering the Holy Eucharist out of Mass increased, a form was drawn up, and was afterwards, about 1200, observed in the Mass itself.

The Priest turns toward the communicant, and gives the minor absolution, being careful not to turn his back to the Blessed Eucharist.

This is not, of course, the sacramental Absolution, which was given when the person went to confession. It is, however, what is called a Sacramental, and is more or less efficacious in purifying the soul from its defects, in proportion to the dispositions with which it is received.

The Priest, having taken up the Blessed Sacrament, turns toward the people, holding it over the ciborium, which is the sacred vessel used for reserving the Blessed Sacrament, and in general outline resembles a chalice with a cover, and says "*Ecce Agnus Dei*," etc., by which St. John the Baptist pointed out our Blessed Lord (John i, 29). He then thrice repeats the words of the Centurion (Matt. viii, 8).

Descending from the altar to the communicants, he makes the sign of the cross with the Blessed Sacrament over each one, and administers the Holy Eucharist. If a bishop is the minister, his ring is kissed by the communicant before receiving.

#### *The First Ablution*

Having received the Blessed Sacrament, and after having administered it if necessary, the Priest stands in the middle of the altar and presents the chalice to the server or Subdeacon, who pours into it as much wine as had been consecrated, that the chalice may be thoroughly purified. While the wine is being poured in, the Priest says the prayer, rinses the chalice, and takes the wine.

#### *The Second Ablution*

Holding over the chalice the thumb and finger of each hand, which had touched the Blessed Sacrament, he goes to the Epistle side of the altar and the server, or the Subdeacon, first pours over them some wine, and then some water, to purify them from any particle of the Sacred Species which may cling to them, the Priest saying the prayer at the same time. He then returns to the middle of the altar, dries his fingers on the purificatory or mundatory, which is a small piece of linen cloth specially used for this purpose, and receives the contents of the chalice. The chalice is then dried, and everything is rearranged as at the beginning. In solemn Mass this is done by the Subdeacon, who carries the chalice, etc., to the credence table; in ordinary Mass it remains on the altar. Until the end of the twelfth century the ablutions of the chalice were made at the end of Mass.

#### *The Communion*

The Priest goes to the Missal, which has been brought back to the Epistle side of the altar, and reads what is called the Communion. At present it consists of only a short thanksgiving quotation, generally taken from the Psalms, and should be sung by the choir; formerly, as well as the Introit and Offertory, the whole Psalm was sung. It varies according to the day or feast. At Milan, in the time of St. Ambrose, Archbishop and Doctor, 397, the canticle of holy Simeon, "*Nunc dimittis*," was said. As the communion of the whole congregation took up a considerable time, appropriate Psalms or Canticles were sung in the interval. In the Western Church generally it was the 33rd Psalm, "*Benedicam Dominum*," but in the Eastern Church it was the 41st, "*Quemadmodum desiderat*."

Having read the Communion, he goes to the middle of the altar, kisses it, and, turning around, salutes the people.

The Priest returns to the Missal, and there, with arms extended according to the early Christian mode of prayers, as can be seen in the catacombs at Rome, he reads or chants a prayer in thanksgiving for having received the Holy Communion. The prayer corresponds with the Collect and Secret, and, like them, varies according to the day or feast. The Missal is then closed, unless a special Gospel has to be read.

He again kisses the altar and salutes the people as before. He, or in solemn Mass the Deacon, then dismisses the congregation.

On days that are not feast days, instead of "Ite," etc., this is said, facing the altar.

In Masses for the Dead this is said or sung, when facing the altar.

Bowing down and with hands joined, but resting them on the altar, the Priest says this concluding prayer which was originally said as a prayer of thanksgiving after the Mass was quite concluded, but it was generally included in the service itself about the ninth century.

#### *The Blessing*

Kissing the altar, and extending his arms, he says the words as far as "Pater," and then turning round towards the people, he makes the sign of the cross over them, and finishes the blessing. It is omitted in Masses for the Dead.

#### *The Blessing Given by a Bishop*

The ceremony of giving a blessing at the end of the Mass arose from the custom, still in use, of the Bishop blessing the clergy and the people as he retired from the altar to the sacristy. In the



eleventh century Priests began to do the same. By degrees the practice arose of giving a formal blessing at the altar, and in the thirteenth century this became the regular custom. Until the time of Pope St. Pius V, O. P., 1572, Priests as well as Bishops made three signs of the cross. He, however, forbade Priests to use more than one sign of the cross, except in solemn Mass. Pope Clement VIII, 1605, restricted the triple cross with a special form to Bishops, and ordained that Priests should bless with a single cross only.

### *The Last Gospel*

Having turned to the Gospel corner of the altar, the Priest makes the sign of the cross on the altar and on his forehead, lips and heart, when he says, "Intium," etc. He then reads the beginning of St. John's Gospel from the card which is on the altar, and at the words, "*Et Verbum caro factum est*," he and all the people genuflect through reverence for the mystery of the Incarnation. When a feast is celebrated on a Sunday, or on a day in Lent, or on Ember day, which has a proper Gospel of its own, that Gospel is read instead of one from St. John. Down to the time of St. Pius V, O. P., 1572, the Priest could either say or omit this Gospel as he pleased, for it was then only a private devotion. This holy Pontiff inserted this Gospel as part of the regular service. Yet, to this day, when a Bishop pontificates, he does not say it at the altar, but as he returns to his throne.

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